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CLARE, TOMMY, AND THE BABY IN CUSTODY.

A Rough Shaking

BY

GEORGE MACDONALD

AUTHOR OF "DAVID ELGINBROD" "AT THE BACK OF THE NORTH WIND" "ALEC FORBES" "RANALD BANNERMAN'S BOYHOOD" &c.

WITH TWELVE PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS BY W. PARKINSON

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Dedicated
to my great-nephew,
Norman MacKay Binney,
aged seven,
because his Godfather and Godmother
love him dearly.

Hampstead, August 26, 1890.

765355

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A ROUGH SHAKING.

CHAPTER I.

HOW I CAME TO KNOW CLARE SKYMER.

IT was a day when everything around seemed almost perfect: everything does, now and then, come nearly right for a moment or two, preparatory to coming all right for good at the last. It was the third week in June. The great furnace was glowing and shining in full force, driving the ship of our life at her best speed through the ocean of space. For on deck, and between decks, and aloft, there is so much more going on at one time than at another, that I may well say she was then going at her best speed, for there is quality as well as rate in motion. The trees were all well clothed, most of them in their very best. Their garments were soaking up the light and the heat, and the wind was going about among them, telling now one and now another, that all was well, and getting through an immense amount of comfort-work in a single minute. It said a word or two to myself as often as it passed me, and made me happier than any boy I know just at present, for I was an old man, and ought to be more easily made happy than any mere beginner.

I was walking through the thin edge of a little wood

of big trees, with a slope of green on my left stretching away into the sunny distance, and the shadows of the trees on my right lying below my feet. The earth and the grass and the trees and the air were together weaving a harmony, and the birds were leading the big orchestra—which was indeed on the largest scale. For the instruments were so different, that some of them only were meant for sound; the part of others was in odour, of others yet in shine, and of still others in motion; while the birds turned it all as nearly into words as they could. Presently, to complete the score, I heard the tones of a man's voice, both strong and sweet. It was talking to some one in a way I could not understand. I do not mean I could not understand the words: I was too far off even to hear them; but I could not understand how the voice came to be so modulated. It was deep, soft, and musical, with something like coaxing in it, and something of tenderness, and the intent of it puzzled me. For I could not conjecture from it the age, or sex, or relation, or kind of the person to whom the words were spoken. You can tell by the voice when a man is talking to himself; it ought to be evident when he is talking to a woman; and you can, surely, tell when he is talking to a child; you could tell if he were speaking to him who made him; and you would be pretty certain if he was holding communication with his dog: it made me feel strange that I could not tell the kind of ear open to the gentle manly voice saying things which the very sound of them made me long to hear. I confess to hurrying my pace a little, but I trust with no improper curiosity, to see—I cannot say the interlocutors, for I had heard, and still heard, only one voice.

About a minute's walk brought me to the corner of the wood where it stopped abruptly, giving way to a field of beautiful grass; and then I saw something it does not need to be old to be delighted withal: the boy that would not have taken pleasure in it, I should count halfway to the gallows. Up to the edge of the wood came, I say, a large field—acres on acres of the sweetest grass; and dividing it from both wood and path stood a fence of three bars, which at the moment separated two as genuine lovers as ever wall of "stones with lime and hair knit up" could have sundered. On one side of the fence stood a man whose face I could not see, and on the other one of the loveliest horses I had ever set eyes upon. I am no better than a middling fair horseman, but, for this horse's sake, I may be allowed to mention that my friends will all have me look at any horse they think of buying. He was over sixteen hands, with well rounded barrel, clean limbs, small head, and broad muzzle; hollows above his eyes of hazy blue, and delicacy of feature, revealed him quite an old horse. His ears pointed forward and downward, as if they wanted on their own account to get a hold of the man the nose was so busily caressing. Neither, I presume, had heard my approach; for all true-love-endearments are shy, and the man had his arm round the horse's neck, and was caressing his face, talking to him much as Philip Sidney's lady, whose lips "seemed at once to kiss and speak," murmured to her pet sparrow, only here the voice was a musical baritone. That there was something between them more than an ordinary person would be likely to understand appeared patent.

Whether or not I made an involuntary sound I cannot tell: I was so taken with the sight, bearing to me an

aspect of something eternal, that I do not know how I carried myself; but the horse gave a little start, half lifted his head, saw me, threw it up, uttered a shrill neigh of warning, stepped back a pace, and stood motionless, waiting apparently for an order from his master—if indeed I ought not rather to call them friends than master and servant.

The man looked round, saw me, turned toward me, and showing no sign that my appearance was unexpected, lifted his hat with a courtesy most Englishmen would reserve for a lady, and advanced a step, almost as if to welcome a guest. I may have owed something of this reception to the fact that he saw before him a man advanced in years, for my beard is very gray, and that by no means prematurely. I saw before me one nearly, if not quite as old as myself. His hair and beard, both rather long, were quite white. His face was wonderfully handsome, with the stillness of a summer sea upon it. Its features were very marked and regular and fine, for the habit of the man was rather spare. What with his white hair and beard, and a certain radiance in his pale complexion, which, I learned afterward, no sun had ever more than browned a little, he reminded me for a moment as he turned, of Cato on the shore of Dante's purgatorial island.

"I fear," I said, "I have intruded!" There was no path where I had come along.

The man laughed—and his laugh was more friendly than an invitation to dinner.

"The land is mine," he answered; "no one can say you intrude."

"Thank you heartily. I live not very far off, and

know the country pretty well, but have got into a part of which I am ignorant."

"You are welcome to go where you will on my property," he answered. "I could not close a field without some sense of having thrown a fellow-being into a dungeon. Whatever be the rights of land, space can belong to the individual only '*as it were*,' to use a Shakspere-phrase. All the best things have to be shared. The house plainly was designed for a family."

While he spoke I scarce heeded his words for looking at the man, so much he interested me. His face was of the palest health, with a faint light from within. He looked about sixty years of age. His forehead was square, and his head rather small, but beautifully modelled; his eyes were of a light hazel, friendly as those of a celestial dog. Though slender in build, he looked strong, and every movement denoted activity.

I was not ready with an answer to what he said. He turned from me, and as if to introduce a companion and so render the interview easier, he called, in tone as gentle as if he spoke to a child, but with that peculiar intonation that had let me understand it was not to a child he was speaking, "Memnon! come;" and turned again to me. His movement and words directed my attention again to the horse, who had stood motionless. At once, but without sign of haste, the animal walked up to the rails, rose gently on his hind legs, came over without touching, walked up to his master, and laid his head on his shoulder.

I bethought me now who the man was. He had been but a year or two in the neighbourhood, though the property on which we now stood had been his own for a good many years. Some said he had bought it; others

knew he had inherited it. All agreed he was a very peculiar person, with ways so oddly unreasonable that it was evident he had, in his wanderings over the face of the earth, gradually lost hold of what sense he might at one time have possessed, and was in consequence a good deal cracked. There seemed nothing, however, in his behaviour or appearance to suggest such a conclusion: a man could hardly be counted beside himself because he was on terms of friendship with his horse. It took me but a moment to recall his name—Skymer—one odd enough to assist the memory. I caught it ere he had done mingling fresh caresses with those of his long-tailed friend. When I came to know him better, I knew that he had thus given me opportunity—such as he would to a horse—of thinking whether I should like to know him better: Mr. Skymer's way was not to offer himself, but to give easy opportunity to any who might wish to know him. I learned afterward that he knew my name and suspected my person: being rather prejudiced in my favour because of the kind of thing I wrote, he was now waiting to see whether approximation would follow.

"Pardon my rude lingering," I said; "that lovely animal is enough to make one desire nearer acquaintance with his owner. I don't think I ever saw such a perfect creature!"

I remembered the next moment that I had heard said of Mr. Skymer that he liked beasts better than men, but I soon found this was only one of the foolish things constantly said of honest men by those who do not understand them.

There are women even who love dogs and dislike children; but, nauseous fact as this is, it is not so nauseous

as the fact that there are men who believe in no animal rights, or in any God of the animals, and think we may do what we please with them, indulging at their cost an insane thirst after knowledge. Injustice may discover facts, but never truth.

"I grant him nearly a perfect creature," he answered. "But he is far more nearly perfect than you yet know him! Excuse me for speaking so confidently; but if we were half as far on for men, as Memnon is for a horse, the kingdom of heaven would be a good deal nearer!"

"He seems an old horse!"

"He is an old horse—much older than you can think after seeing him come over that paling as he did. He is forty."

"Is it possible!"

"I know and can prove his age as certainly as my own. He is the son of an Arab mare and an English thoroughbred.—Come here, Memnon!"

The horse, who had been standing behind like a servant in waiting, put his beautiful head over his master's shoulder.

"Memnon," said Mr. Skymer, "go home and tell Mrs. Waterhouse I hope to bring a gentleman with me to lunch."

The horse walked gently past us, then started at a quick trot, which almost immediately became a gallop.

"The dear fellow," said his master, "would not gallop like that if he were on the hard road; he knows I would not like it."

"But, excuse me, how can the animal convey your message?—how communicate what he knows, if he does understand what you say to him?"

"He will at least take care that the housekeeper look in his mane for the knot which perhaps you did not observe me tie in it."

"You have a code of signals by knots then?"

"Yes—comprising about half a dozen possibilities.—I hope you do not object to the message I sent! You will do me the honour of lunching with me?"

"You are most kind," I answered—with a little hesitation, I suppose, fearing to bore my new acquaintance.

"Don't make me false to horse and housekeeper, Mr. Gowrie," he resumed.—"I put the horse first, because I could more easily explain the thing to Mrs. Waterhouse than to Memnon."

"Could you explain it to Memnon?"

"I should have a try!" he answered, with a peculiar smile.

"You hold yourself bound then to keep faith with your horse?"

"Bound just as with a man—that is, as far as the horse can understand me. A word understood is binding, whether spoken to horse, or man, or pig. It makes it the more important that we can do so little, must work so slowly, for the education of the lower animals. It seems to me an absolute horror that a man should lie to an inferior creature. Just think—if an angel were to lie to us! What a shock to find we had been reposing faith in a devil."

"Excuse me—I thought you said *an angel!*"

"When he lied, would he not be a devil?—But let us follow Memnon, and as we walk I will tell you more about him."

He turned to the wood.

"The horse," I said, pointing, "went that way!"

"Yes," answered his master; "he knew it was nearer for him to take the long way round. If I had started him and one of the dogs together, the horse would have gone that way, and the dog taken the path we are now following."

We walked a score or two of yards in silence.

"You promised to tell me more about your wonderful horse!" I said.

"With pleasure. I delight in talking about my poor brothers and sisters! Most of them are only savages yet, but there would be far fewer such if we did not treat them as slaves instead of friends. One day, however, all will be well for them as for us—thank God."

"I hope so," I responded heartily. "But please tell me," I said, "something more about your Memnon."

Mr. Skymer thought for a moment.

"Perhaps, after all," he rejoined, "his best accomplishment is that he can fetch and carry like a dog. I will tell you one of his feats that way. But first you must know that, having travelled a good deal, and in some wild countries, I have picked up things it is well to know, even if not the best of their kind. A man may fail by not knowing the second best! I was once out on Memnon, five and twenty miles from home, when I came to a cottage where I found a woman lying ill. I saw what was wanted. The country was strange to me, and I could not have found a doctor. I wrote a little pencil-note, fastened it to the saddle, and told the horse to go home and bring me what the housekeeper gave him—and not to spare himself. He went off at a steady trot of ten or twelve miles an hour. I went into the cottage, and,

awaiting his return, did what I could for the woman. I confess I felt anxious!"

"You well might," I said: "why should you say *confess?*"

"Because I had no business to be anxious."

"It was your business to do all for her you could."

"I was doing that! If I hadn't been, I should have had good cause to be anxious! But I knew that another was looking after her; and to be anxious was to meddle with his part!"

"I see now," I answered, and said nothing more for some time.

"What a lather poor Memnon came back in! You should have seen him! He had been gone nearly five hours, and neither time nor distance accounted for the state he was in. I did not let him do anything for a week. I should have had to sit up with him that night, if I had not been sitting up at any rate. The poor fellow had been caught, and had made his escape. His bridle was broken, and there were several long skin wounds in his belly, as if he had scraped the top of a wall set with bits of glass. How far he had galloped, there was no telling."

"Not in vain, I hope! The poor woman?"

"She recovered. The medicine was all right in a pocket under the flap of the saddle. Before morning she was much better, and lived many years after. Memnon and I did not lose sight of her.—But you should have seen the huge creature lying on the floor of that cabin like a worn-out dog, abandoned and content! I rubbed him down carefully, as well as I could, and tied my poncho round him, before I let him go to sleep. Then as soon as my patient seemed quieted for the night, I made

up a big fire of her peats, and they slept like two babies, only they both snored.—The woman beat," he added with a merry laugh. "It was the first, almost the only time I ever heard a horse snore.—As we walked home next day he kept steadily behind me. In general we walked side by side. Either he felt too tired to talk to me, or he was not satisfied with himself because of something that had happened the day before. Perhaps he had been careless, and so allowed himself to be taken. I do not think it likely."

"What a loss it will be to you when he dies!" I said.

He looked grave for an instant, then replied cheerfully—

"Of course I shall miss the dear fellow—but not more than he will miss me; and it will be good for us both."

"Then," said I,—a little startled, I confess, "you really think—" and there I stopped.

"Do *you* think, Mr. Gowrie," he rejoined, answering my unpropounded question, "that a God like Jesus Christ, would invent such a delight for his children as the society and love of animals, and then let death part them for ever? I don't."

"I am heartily willing to be your disciple in the matter," I replied.

"I know well," he resumed, "the vulgar laugh that serves the poor public for sufficient answer to anything, and the common-place retort: 'You can't give a shadow of proof for your theory!'—to which I answer, 'I never was the fool to imagine I could; but as surely as you go to bed at night expecting to rise again in the morning, so surely do I expect to see my dear old Memnon again when I wake from what so many Christians call the sleep

that knows no waking.'—Think, Mr. Gowrie, just think of all the children in heaven—what a superabounding joy the creatures would be to them!—There is one class, however," he went on, "which I should like to see wait a while before they got their creatures back;—I mean those foolish women who, for their own pleasure, so spoil their dogs that they make other people hate them, doing their best to keep them from rising in the scale of God's creation."

"They don't know better!" I said. For every time he stopped, I wanted to hear what he would say next.

"True," he answered; "but how much do they want to know the right way of anything? They have good and lovely instincts—like their dogs, but do they care that there is a right way and a wrong way of following them?"

We walked in silence, and were now coming near the other side of the small wood.

"I hope I shall not interfere with your plans for the day!" I said.

"I seldom have any plans for the day," he answered. "Or if I have, they are made to break easily. In general I wait. The hour brings its plans with it—comes itself to tell me what is wanted of me. It has done so now. And see, there is Memnon again in attendance on us!"

There, sure enough, was the horse, on the other side of the paling that here fenced the wood from a well-kept country-road. His long neck was stretched over it toward his master.

"Memnon," said Mr. Skymer as we issued by the gate, "I want you to carry this gentleman home."

I had often enough in my youth ridden without a saddle. but seldom indeed without some sort of bridle,

however inadequate: I did not, at the first thought of the thing, relish mounting without one a horse of which all I knew was that he and his master were on better terms than I had ever seen man and horse upon before. But even while the thought was passing through my head, Memnon was lying at my feet, flat as his equine rotundity would permit. Ashamed of my doubt, I lost not a moment in placing myself in the position suggested by Sir John Falstaff to Prince Hal for the defence of his own bulky carcase—astride the body of the animal, namely. At once he rose and lifted me into the natural relation of man and horse. Then he looked round at his master, and they set off at a leisurely pace.

"You have me captive!" I said.

"Memnon and I," answered Mr. Skymer, "will do what we can to make your captivity pleasant."

A silence followed my thanks. In this procession of horse and foot, we went about half a mile ere anything more was said worth setting down. Then began evidence that we were drawing nigh to a house: the grassy lane between hedges in which we had been moving, was gradually changing its character. First came trees in the hedge-rows. Then the hedges gave way to trees—a grand avenue of splendid elms and beeches alternated. The ground under our feet was the loveliest sward, and between us and the sun came the sweetest shadow. A glad heave but instant subsidence of the live power under me, let me know Memnon's delight at feeling the soft elastic turf under his feet: he had said to himself, "Now we shall have a gallop!" but immediately checked the thought with the reflection that he was no longer a colt ignorant of manners

"What a lovely road the turf makes!" I said. "It is a lower sky—solidified for feet that are not yet angelic."

My host looked up with a brighter smile than he had shown before.

"It is the only kind of road I really like," he said, "—though turf has its disadvantages! I have as much of it about the place as it will bear. Such roads won't do for carriages!"

"You ride a good deal, I suppose?"

"I do. I was at one time so accustomed to horseback that, without thinking, I was not aware whether I was on my horse's feet or my own."

"Where, may I ask, does my friend who is now doing me the favour to carry 'this weight and size,' come from?"

"He was born in England, but his mother was a Syrian —of one of the oldest breeds there known. He was born into my arms, and for a week never touched the ground. Next month, as I think I mentioned, he will be forty years old!"

"It is a great age for a horse!" I said.

"The more the shame as well as the pity!" he answered.

"Then you think horses might live longer?"

"Much longer than they are allowed to live in this country," he answered. "And a part of our punishment is that we do not know them. We treat them so selfishly that they do not live long enough to become our friends. At present there are but few men worthy of their friendship. What else is a man's admiration, when it is without love or respect or justice, but a bitter form of despite! It is small wonder there should be so many stupid horses, when they receive so little education, have such bad associates, and die so much too young to have gained any ripe

experience to transmit to their posterity. Where would humanity be now, if we all went before five-and-twenty?"

"I think you must be right. I have myself in my possession at this moment, given me by one who loved her, an ink-stand made from the hoof of a pony that died at the age of at least forty-two, and did her part of the work of a pair till within a year or two of her death.—Poor little Zephyr!"

"Why, Mr. Gowrie, you talk of her as if she were a Christian!" exclaimed Mr. Skymer.

"That's how you talked of Memnon a moment ago! Where is the difference? Not in the size, though Memnon would make three of Zephyr!"

"I didn't say *poor Memnon*, did I? You said *poor Zephyr!* That is the way Christians talk about their friends gone home to the grand old family mansion! Why they do, they would hardly like one to tell them!"

"It is true," I responded. "I understand you now! I don't think I ever heard a widow speak of her departed husband without putting *poor*, or *poor dear*, before his name.—By the way, when you hear a woman speak of her *late* husband, can you help thinking her ready to marry again?"

"It does sound as if she had done with him! But here we are at the gate!—Call, Memnon."

The horse gave a clear whinny, gentle, but loud enough to be heard at some distance. It was a tall gate of wrought iron, but Memnon's summons was answered by one who could clear it—though not open it any more than he: a little bird, which I was not ornithologist enough to recognize—mainly because of my short-sightedness, I hope—came fluttering from the long avenue within, perched on

the top of the gate, looked down at our party for a moment as if debating the prudent, dropped suddenly on Memnon's left ear, and thence to his master's shoulder, where he sat till the gate was opened. The little one went half-way up the inner avenue with us, making several flights and returns before he left us.

The boy that opened the gate, a chubby little fellow of seven, looked up in Mr. Skymer's face as if he had been his father and king in one, and stood gazing after him as long as he was in sight. I noticed also—who could have failed to notice?—that every now and then a bird would drop from the tree we were passing under, and alight for a minute on my host's head. Once when he happened to uncover it, seven or eight perched together upon it. One tiny bird got caught in his beard by the claws.

"You cannot surely have tamed *all* the birds in your grounds!" I said.

"If I have," he answered, "it has been by permitting them to be themselves."

"You mean it is the nature of birds to be friendly with man?"

"I do. Through long ages men have been their enemies, and so have alienated them—they too not being themselves."

"You mean that unfriendliness is not natural to men?"

"It cannot be human to be cruel!"

"How is it, then, that so many boys are careless what suffering they inflict?"

"Because they have in them the blood of men who loved cruelty, and never repented of it."

"But how do you account for those men loving cruelty

—for their being what you say is contrary to their nature?"

"Ah, if I could account for that, I should be at the secret of most things! All I meant to half-explain was, how it came that so many who have no wish to inflict suffering, yet are careless of inflicting it."

I saw that we must know each other better before he would quite open his mind to me. I saw that though, hospitable of heart, he threw his best rooms open to all, there were others in his house into which he did not invite every acquaintance.

The avenue led to a wide gravelled space before a plain, low, long building in whitish stone, with pillared portico. In the middle of the space was a fountain, and close to it a few chairs. Mr. Skymer begged me to be seated. Memnon walked up to the fountain, and lay down, that I might get off his back as easily as I had got on it. Once down, he turned on his side, and lay still.

"The air is so mild," said my host, "I fancy you will prefer this to the house."

"Mild!" I rejoined; "I should call it hot!"

"I have been so much in real heat!" he returned. "Notwithstanding my love of turf, I keep this much in gravel for the sake of the desert."

"I took the seat he offered me, wondering whether Memnon was comfortable where he lay; and, absorbed in the horse, did not see my host go to the other side of the basin. Suddenly we were "clothed upon" with a house which, though it came indeed from the earth, might well have come direct from heaven: a great uprush of water spread above us a tent-like dome, through which the sun came with a cool, broken, almost frosty glitter. We

seemed in the heart of a huge soap-bubble. I exclaimed with delight.

"I thought you would enjoy my sun-shade!" said Mr. Skymer. "Memnon and I often come here of a hot morning, when nobody wants us. Don't we, Memnon?"

The horse lifted his nose a little, and made a low soft noise, a chord of mingled obedience and delight—a moan of pleasure mixed with a half-born whinny.

We had not been seated many moments, and had scarcely pushed off the shore of silence into a new sea of talk, when we were interrupted by the invasion of half a dozen dogs. They were of all sorts down to no sort. Mr. Skymer called one of them Tadpole—I suppose because he had the hugest tail, while his legs were not visible without being looked for.

"That animal," said his master, "—he looks like a dog, but who would be positive what he was!—is the cleverest in the pack. He seems to me a rare individuality. His ancestors must have been of all sorts, and he has gathered from them every good quality possessed by each. Think what a man might be—made up that way!"

"Why is there no such man?" I said.

"There may be some such men. There must be many one day," he answered, "—but not for a while yet. Men must first be made willing to be noble."

"And you don't think men willing to be made noble?"

"Oh yes! willing enough, some of them, to be *made* noble!"

"I do not understand. I thought you said they were not!"

"They are willing enough *to be made* noble; but that is very different from being willing *to be* noble: that takes

trouble. How can any one become noble who desires it so little as not to fight for it!"

The man drew me more and more. He had a way of talking about things seldom mentioned except in dull fashion in the pulpit, as if he cared about them. He spoke as of familiar things, but made you feel he was looking out of a high window. There are many who never speak of real things except in a false tone; this man spoke of such without an atom of assumed solemnity—in his ordinary voice: they came into his mind as to their home—not as dreams of the night, but as facts of the day.

I sat for a while, gazing up through the thin veil of water at the blue sky so far beyond. I thought how like that veil was to our little life here, overdomed by that boundless foreshortening of space. The lines in Shelley's *Adonais* came to me:

> "Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
> Stains the white radiance of Eternity,
> Until Death tramples it to fragments."

Then I thought of what my host had said concerning the too short lives of horses, and wondered what he would say about those of dogs.

"Dogs are more intelligent than horses," I said: "why do they live a yet shorter time?"

"I doubt if you would say so in an Arab's tent," he returned. "If you had said, 'still more affectionate,' I should have known better how to answer you."

"Then I do say so," I replied.

"And I return, that is just why they live no longer. They do not find the world good enough for them, die, and leave it."

"They have a much happier life than horses!"

"Many dogs than some horses, I grant."

That instant arose what I fancied must be an unusual sound in the place: two of the dogs were fighting. The master got up. I thought with myself, "Now we shall see his notions of discipline!" nor had I long to wait. In his hand was a small riding-whip, which I afterward found he always carried in avoidance of having to inflict a heavier punishment from inability to inflict a lighter; for he held that in all wrong-doing man can deal with, the kindest thing is not only to punish, but, with animals especially, to punish at once. He ran to the conflicting parties. They separated the moment they heard the sound of his coming. One came cringing and crawling to his feet; the other—it was the nondescript Tadpole—stood a little way off, wagging his tail, and cocking his head up in his master's face. He gave the one at his feet several pretty severe cuts with the whip, and sent him off. The other drew nearer. His master turned away and took no notice of him.

"May I ask," I said, when he returned to his seat, "why you did not punish both the animals for their breach of the peace?"

"They did not both deserve it."

"How could you tell that? You were not looking when the quarrel began!"

"Ah, but you see I know the dogs! One of them—I saw at a glance how it was—had found a bone, and dog-rule about finding is, that what you find is yours. The other, notwithstanding, wanted a share. It was Tadpole who found the bone, and he—partly from his sense of justice—cannot endure to have his claims infringed upon.

Every dog of them knows that Tadpole must be in the right."

"He looked as if he expected you to approve of his conduct!"

"Yes, that is the worst of Tadpole! he is so self-righteous as to imagine he deserves praise for standing on his rights! He is but a dog, you see, and knows no better!"

"I noticed you disregarded his appeal."

"I was not going to praise him for nothing!"

"You expect them to understand your treatment?"

"No one can tell how infinitesimally small the beginnings of understanding, as of life, may be. The only way to make animals reasonable—more reasonable, I mean—is to treat them as reasonable. Until you can go down into the abysses of creation, you cannot know *when* a nature begins to see a difference in quality of action."

"I confess," I said, "Mr. Tadpole did seem a little ashamed as he went away."

"And you see Blanco White at my feet, taking care not to touch them. He is giving time, he thinks, for my anger to pass."

He laughed the merriest laugh. The dog looked up eagerly, but dropped his head again.

If I go on like this, however, I shall have to take another book to tell the story for which I began the present! In short, I was drawn to the man as never to another since the friend of my youth went where I shall go to seek and find him one day—or, more likely, one solemn night. I was greatly his inferior, but love is a quick divider of shares: he that gathers much has nothing over, and he that gathers little has no lack. I

soon ceased to think of him as my *new* friend, for I seemed to have known him before I was born.

I am going to tell the early part of his history. If only I could tell it as it deserves to be told! The most interesting story may be so narrated as that only the eyes of a Shakspere could spy the shine underneath its dull surface.

He never told me any great portion of the tale of his life continuously. One thing would suggest another—generally with no connection in time. I have pieced the parts together myself. He did indeed set out more than once or twice to give me his history, but always we got discussing something, and so it was interrupted.

I will not write what I have set in order as if he were himself narrating: the most modest man in the world would that way be put at a disadvantage. The constant recurrence of the capital *I*, is apt to rouse in the mind of the reader, especially if he be himself egotistic, more or less of irritation at the egotism of the narrator—while in reality the freedom of a man's personal utterance *may be* owing to his lack of the egotistic. Partly for my friend's sake, therefore, I shall tell the story as—what indeed it is—a narrative of my own concerning him.

CHAPTER II.

WITH HIS PARENTS.

THE lingering, long-drawn-out *table d'hôte* dinner was just over in one of the inns on the *cornice* road. The gentlemen had gone into the garden, and some of the

ladies to the *salotto*, where open windows admitted the odours of many a flower and blossoming tree, for it was toward the end of spring in that region. One had sat down to a tinkling piano, and was striking a few chords, more to her own pleasure than that of the company. Two or three were looking out into the garden, where the diaphanous veil of twilight had so speedily thickened to the crape of night, its darkness filled with thousands of small isolated splendours—fire-flies, those "golden boats" never seen "on a sunny sea," but haunting the eves of the young summer, pulsing, pulsing through the dusky air with seeming aimlessness, like sweet thoughts that have no faith to bind them in one. A tall, graceful woman stood in one of the windows alone. She had never been in Italy before, had never before seen fire-flies, and was absorbed in the beauty of their motion as much as in that of their golden flashes. Each roving star had a tide in its light that rose and ebbed as it moved, so that it seemed to push itself on by its own radiance, ever waxing and waning. In wide, complicated dance, they wove a huge, warpless tapestry with the weft of an ever vanishing aureate shine. The lady, an Englishwoman evidently, gave a little sigh and looked round, regretting, apparently, that her husband was not by her side to look on the loveliness that woke a faint-hued fairy-tale in her heart. The same moment he entered the room and came to her. He was a man above the middle height, and from the slenderness of his figure, looked taller than he was. He had a vivacity of motion, a readiness to turn on his heel, a free swing of the shoulders, and an erect carriage of the head, which all marked him a man of action: one that speculated on his calling would immediately have had his sense of

fitness satisfied when he heard that he was the commander of an English gun-boat, which he was now on his way to Genoa to join. He was young—within the twenties, though looking two or three and thirty, his face was so browned by sun and wind. His features were regular and attractive, his eyes so dark that the liveliness of their movement seemed hardly in accord with the weight of their colour. His wife was very fair, with large eyes of the deepest blue of eyes. She looked delicate, and was very lovely. They had been married about five years. A friend had brought them in his yacht as far as Nice, and they were now going on by land. From Genoa the lady must find her way home without her husband.

The lights in the room having been extinguished that the few present might better see the fire-flies, he put his arm round her waist.

"I'm so glad you're come, Henry!" she said, favoured by the piano. "I was uncomfortable at having the lovely sight all to myself!"

"It is lovely, darling!" he rejoined; then, after a moment's pause, added, "I hope you will be able to sleep without the sea to rock you!"

"No fear of that!" she answered. "The stillness will be delightful. I was thoroughly reconciled to the motion of the yacht," she went on, "but there is a satisfaction in feeling the solid earth under you, and knowing it will keep steady all night."

"I am glad you like the change. I never sleep the first night on shore.—I cannot tell what it is, but somehow I keep wishing Fyvie could have taken us all the way."

"Never mind, love. I will keep awake with you."

"It's not that! How could I mind lying awake with you beside me! Oh Grace, you don't know, you cannot know, what you are to me! I don't feel in the least that you're my other half, as people say. You're not like a part of myself at all; to think so would be sacrilege! You are quite another, else how could you be mine! You make me forget myself altogether. When I look at you, I stand before an enchanted mirror that cannot show what is in front of it."

"No, Harry; I'm a true mirror, for I hold that inside me which remains outside me."

"I fear you've got beyond me!" said her husband, laughing. "You always do!"

"Yes, at nonsense, Harry."

"Then your speech was nonsense, was it?"

"No; it was full of sense. But think of something you would like me to say; I must fetch the boy to see the fire-flies; when I come back I will say it."

She left the room. Her husband stood where he was, gazing out, with a tender look in his face that deepened to sadness—whether from the haunting thought of his wife's delicate health and his having to leave her, or from some strange foreboding, I cannot tell. When presently she returned with their one child in her arms, he made haste to take him from her.

"My darling," he said, "he is much too heavy for you! How stupid of me not to think of it! If you don't promise me never to do that at home, I will take him to sea with me!"

The child, a fair, bright boy, the sleep in whose eyes had turned to wonder, for they seemed to see everything, and be quite satisfied with nothing, went readily to his

father, but looked back at his mother. The only sign he gave that he was delighted with the fire-flies was, that he looked now to the one, now to the other of his parents, speechless, with shining eyes. He knew they were feeling just like himself. Silent communion was enough.

The father turned to carry him back to bed. The mother turned to look after them. As she did so, her eyes fell upon two or three delicate, small-leaved plants —I do not know what they were—that stood in pots on the balcony in front of the open window: they were shivering. The night was perfectly still, but their leaves trembled as with an ague-fit.

"Look, Harry! What is that?" she cried, pointing to them.

He turned and looked, said it must be some loaded wagon passing, and went off with the child.

"I hope to-morrow will be just like to-day!" said his wife when he returned. "What shall we do with it?—our one real holiday, you know!"

"I have a notion in my head," he answered. "That little town Georgina spoke of, is not far from here—among the hills: shall we go and see it?"

CHAPTER III.

WITHOUT HIS PARENTS.

THE sun in England seems to shine because he cannot help it; the sun in Italy seems to shine because he means it, and wants to mean it. Thus he shone the next morning, including in his attentions a curious little

couple, husband and wife, who, attended by a guide, and borne by animals which might be mules and might be donkeys, and were not lovely to look on except through sympathy with their ugliness, were slowly ascending a steep terraced and zigzagged road, with olive trees above and below them. They were on the south side of the hill, and the olives gave them none of the little shadow they have in their power, for the trees next the sun were always below the road. The man often wiped his red, innocent face, and looked not a little distressed; but the lady, although as stout as he, did not seem to suffer, perhaps because she was sheltered by a very large bonnet. After a silence of a good many minutes, she was the first to speak.

"I can't say but I'm disappointed in the olives, Thomas," she remarked. "They ain't much to keep the sun off you!"

"They wouldn't look bad along a brookside in Essex!" returned her husband. "Here they do seem a bit out of place!"

"Well, but, poor things! how are they to help it—with only a trayful of earth under their feet! If you planted a priest on a terrace he would soon be as thin as they!"

They had just passed a very stout priest, in a low broad hat, and cassock, and she laughed merrily at her small joke. They were an English country parson and his wife, abroad for the first time in their now middle-aged lives, and happy as children just out of school. Incapable of disliking anybody, there was no unkindness in Mrs. Porson's laughter.

"I don't see," she resumed, "how they ever can have a picnic in such a country!"

"Why not?"

"There's no place to sit down!"

"Here's a whole hill-side!"

"But so hard!" she answered. "There's not an inch of turf or grass in any direction!"

The pair—equally plump, and equally good-natured—laughed together.

I need not give more of their talk. It was better than most talk, yet not worth recording. Their guide, perceiving that they knew no more of Italian than he did of English, had withdrawn to the rear, and stumped along behind them all the way, holding much converse with his donkeys however, admonishing now this one, now that one, and seeming not a little hurt with their behaviour, to judge from the expostulations that accompanied his occasionally more potent arguments. Assuredly the speed they made was small; but it was a festa, and hot.

They were on the way to a small town some distance from the shore, on the crest of the hill they were now ascending. It would, from the number of its inhabitants, have been in England a village, but there are no villages in the Riviera. However insignificant a place may be, it is none the less a town, possibly a walled town. Somebody had told Mr. and Mrs. Porson they ought to visit Graffiacane, and to Graffiacane they were therefore bound: why they ought to visit it, and what was to be seen there, they took the readiest way to know.

The place was indeed a curious one, high among the hills, and on the top of its own hill, with approaches to it like the trenches of a siege. All the old towns in that region seem to have climbed up to look over the heads of other things. Graffiacane saw over hills and valleys and

many another town—each with its church standing highest, the guardian of the flock of houses beneath it; saw over many a water-course, mostly dry, with lovely oleanders growing in the middle of it; saw over multitudinous oliveyards and vineyards· saw over mills with great wheels, and little ribbons of water to drive them—running sometimes along the tops of walls to get at their work; saw over rugged pines, and ugly, verdureless, raw hillsides—away to the sea, lying in the heat like a heavenly vat in which all the tails of all the peacocks God was making, lay steeped in their proper dye. Numerous were the sharp turns the donkeys made in their ascent; and at this corner and that, the sweetest life-giving wind would leap out upon the travellers, as if it had been lying there in wait to surprise them with the heavenliest the old earth, young for all her years, could give them. But they were getting too tired to enjoy anything, and were both indeed not far from asleep on the backs of their humble beasts, when a sudden, more determined yet more cheerful assault of their guide upon his donkeys, roused both them and their riders; and looking sleepily up, with his loud *heeoop* ringing in their ears, and a sense of the insidious approach of two headaches, they saw before them the little town, its houses gathered close for protection, like a brood of chickens, and the white steeple of the church rising above them, like the neck of the love-valiant hen.

Passing through the narrow arch of the low-browed gateway, hot as was the hour, a sudden cold struck to their bones. For not a ray of light shone into the narrow street. The houses were lofty as those of a city, and parted so little by the width of the street that friends on

opposite sides might almost from their windows have shaken hands. Narrow, rough, steep old stone-stairs ran up between and inside the houses, all the doors of which were open to the air—here, however, none of the sweetest. Everywhere was shadow; everywhere one or another evil odour; everywhere a look of abject and dirty poverty—to an English eye, that is. Everywhere were pretty children, young, slatternly mothers, withered-up grandmothers, the gleam of glowing reds and yellows, and the coolness of subdued greens and fine blues. Such at least was the composite first impression made on Mr. and Mrs. Porson. As it was a festa, more men than usual were looking out of cavern-like doorways or over hand-wrought iron balconies, were leaning their backs against door-posts, and smoking as if too lazy to stop. Many of the women were at prayers in the church. All was orderly, and quieter than usual for a festa. None could have told the reason; the townsfolk were hardly aware that an undefinable oppression was upon them—an oppression that lay also upon their visitors, and the donkeys that had toiled with them up the hills and slow-climbing valleys.

It added to the gloom and consequent humidity of the town that the sides of the streets were connected, at the height of two or perhaps three stories, by thin arches—mere jets of stone from the one house to the other, with but in rare instance the smallest superstructure to keep down the key of the arch. Whatever the intention of them, they might seem to serve it, for the time they had straddled there undisturbed had sufficed for moss and even grass to grow upon those which Mr. Porson now regarded with curious speculation. A bit of an architect,

and foiled, he summoned at last what Italian he could, supplemented it with Latin and a terminational *o* or *a* tacked to any French or English word that offered help, and succeeded, as he believed, in gathering from a by-stander, that the arches were there because of the earth-quakes.

He had not language enough of any sort to pursue the matter, else he would have asked his informant how the arch they were looking at could be of any service, seeing it had no weight on the top, and but a slight endlong pressure must burst it up. Turning away to tell his wife what he had learned, he was checked by a low rumbling, like distant thunder, which he took for the firing of festa guns, having discovered that Italians were fond of all kinds of noises. The next instant they felt the ground under their feet move up and down and from side to side with confused motion. A sudden great cry arose. One moment and down every stair, out of every door, like animals from their holes, came men, women, and children, with a rush. The earthquake was upon them.

But in such narrow streets, the danger could hardly be less than inside the houses, some of which, the older especially, were ill constructed—mostly with boulder-stones that had neither angles nor edges, hence little grasp on each other beyond what the friction of their weight, and the adhesion of their poor old friable cement, gave them; for the Italians, with a genius for building, are careless of certain constructive essentials. After about twenty seconds of shaking, the lonely pair began to hear, through the noise of the cries of the people, some such houses as these rumbling to the earth.

They were far more bewildered than frightened. They were both of good nerve, and did not know the degree of danger they were in, while the strangeness of the thing contributed to an excitement that helped their courage. I cannot say how they might have behaved in an hotel full of their countrymen and countrywomen, running and shrieking, and altogether comporting themselves as if they knew there was no God. The fear on all sides might there have infected them; but the terror of the inhabitants who knew better than they what the thing meant, did not much shake them. For one moment many of the people stood in the street motionless, pale, and staring; the next they all began to run, some for the gateway, but the greater part up the street, staggering as they ran. The movement of the ground was indeed small—not more, perhaps, than half an inch in any direction—but fear and imagination weakened all their limbs. They had not run far, however, before the terrible unrest ceased as suddenly as it had begun.

The English pair drew a long breath where they stood —for they had not stirred a step, or indeed thought whither to run—and imagining it over for a hundred years, looked around them. Their guide had disappeared. The two donkeys stood perfectly still with their heads hanging down. They seemed in deep dejection, and incapable of movement. A few men only were yet to be seen. They were running up the street. In a moment more it would be empty. They were the last of those that had let the women go to church without them. They were hurrying to join them in the sanctuary, the one safe place: the rest of the town might be shaken in heaps on its foundations, but the church would stand!

Guessing their goal, the Porsons followed them. But they were neither of a build nor in a condition to make haste, and the road was uphill. No one place, however, was far from another within the toy-town, and they came presently to an open *piazza*, on the upper side of which rose the great church. It had a square front, masking with its squareness the triangular gable of the building. Upon this screen, in the brightest of colours, magenta and sky-blue predominating, was represented the day of judgment—the mother seated on the right hand of the judge, and casting a pitiful look upon the miserable assembly on her left. The square was a good deal on the slope, and as they went slowly up to the church, they kept looking at the picture. The last tatters of the skirt of the crowd had disappeared through the great door, and but for themselves the square was empty. All at once the picture at which they were gazing, the spread of wall on which it was painted, the whole bulk of the huge building began to shudder, and went on shuddering—"just," Mr. Porson used to say when describing the thing to a friend, "like the skin of a horse determined to get rid of a gad-fly." The same moment the tiles on the roof began to clatter like so many castanets in the hands of giants, and the ground to wriggle and heave. But they were too much absorbed in what was before their eyes to heed much what went on under their feet. The oscillatory displacement of the front of the church did not at most seem to cover more than a hand-breadth, but it was enough. Down came the plaster surface, with the judge and his mother, clashing on the pavement below, while the good and the bad yet stood trembling. A few of the people came running out, think-

ing the open square after all safer than the church, but there was no rush to the open air. The shaking had lasted about twenty seconds, or at most half a minute, when, without indication to the eyes watching the front, there came a roaring crash and a huge rumbling, through and far above which, rose a multitudinous shriek of terror, dismay, and agony, and a number of men and women issued as if shot from a catapult. Then a few came straggling out, and then—no more. The roof had fallen upon the rest.

With the first rush from the church, the shaking ceased utterly, and the still earth seemed again the immovable thing the English spectators had conceived her. Of what had taken place there was little sign on the earth, no sign in the blue sun-glorious heaven; only in the air there was a cloud of dust so thick as to look almost solid, and from the cloud, as it seemed, came a ghastly cry, mingled of shrieks and groans and articulate appeals for help. The cry kept on issuing, while the calm front of the church, dominated by that frightful canopy, went on displaying the assembled nations delivered from their awful judge. While the multitude groaned within, it spread itself out to the sun in silent composure, welcoming and cherishing his rays in what was left of its gorgeous hues.

The Porsons stood for a moment stunned, came to their senses, and made haste to enter the building. With white faces and trembling hands, they drew aside the heavy leather curtain that hung within the great door, but could for a moment see nothing; the air inside seemed filled with a solid yellow dust. As their eyes recovered from the sudden change of sunlight for gloom, however, they began to distinguish the larger outlines, and perceived

that the floor was one confused heap of rafters and bricks and tiles and stones and lime. The centre of the roof had been a great dome; now there was nothing between their eyes and the clear heaven but the slowly vanishing cloud of ruin. In the mound below they could at first distinguish nothing human—could not have told, in the dim chaos, limbs from broken rafters. Eager to help, they dared not set their feet upon the mass—not that they feared the walls which another shock might bring upon their heads, but that they shuddered lest their own added weight should crush some live human creature they could not descry. Three or four who had received little or no hurt, were moving about the edges of the heap, vaguely trying to lift now this, now that, but yielding each attempt in despair, either from its evident uselessness, or for lack of energy. They would give a pull at a beam that lay across some writhing figure, find it immovable, and turn with a groan to some farther cry. How or where were they to help? Others began to come in with white faces and terror-stricken eyes; and before long the sepulchral ruin had little groups all over it, endeavouring in shiftless fashion to bring rescue to the prisoned souls.

The Porsons saw nothing they could do. Great beams and rafters which it was beyond their power to move an inch, lay crossed in all directions; and they could hold little communication with those who were in a fashion at work. Alas, they were little better than vainly busy, while the louder moans accompanying their attempts revealed that they added to the tortures of those they sought to deliver! The two saw more plainly now, and could distinguish contorted limbs, and here and there a countenance. The silence, more and more seldom broken, was growing itself

terrible. Had they known how many were buried there, they would have wondered so few were left able to cry out. At moments there was absolute stillness in the dreadful place. The heart of Mrs. Porson began to sink.

"Do come out," she whispered, afraid of her own voice. "I feel so sick and faint, I fear I shall drop."

As she spoke something touched her leg. She gave a cry and started aside. It was a hand, but of the body to which it belonged nothing could be seen. It must have been its last movement; now it stuck there motionless. Then they spied amid sad sights a sadder still. Upon the heap, a little way from its edge, sat a child of about three, dressed like a sailor, gazing down at something—they could not see what. Going a little nearer, they saw it—the face of a fair woman, evidently English, who lay dead, with a great beam across her heart. The child showed no trace of tears; his white face seemed frozen. The stillness upon it was not despair, but suggested a world in which hope had never yet been born. Pity drove Mrs. Porson's sickness away.

"My dear!" she said; but the child took no heed. Her voice, however, seemed to wake something in him. He started to his feet, and rushing at the beam, began to tug at it with his tiny hands. Mrs. Porson burst into tears.

"It's no use, darling!" she cried.

"Wake mamma!" he said, turning, and looking up at her.

"She will not wake," sobbed Mrs. Porson.

Her husband stood by speechless, choking back the tears of which, being an Englishman, he was ashamed.

"She *will* wake," returned the boy. "She always wakes when I kiss her."

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MRS. PORSON FINDS CLARE BY THE SIDE OF HIS DEAD MOTHER.

He knelt beside her, to prove upon her white face the efficacy of the measure he had never until now known to fail. That he had already tried it was plain, for he had kissed away much of the dust, though none of the death. When once more he found that she did not even close her lips to return his passionate salute, he desisted. With that saddest of things, a child's sigh, and a look that seemed to Mrs. Porson to embody the riddle of humanity, he reseated himself on the beam, with his little feet on his mother's bosom, where so often she had made them warm. He did not weep; he did not fix his eyes on his mother; his look was level and moveless and set upon nothing. He seemed to have before him an utter blank —as if the outer wall of creation had risen frowning in front, and he knew there was nothing behind it but chaos.

"Where is your papa?" asked Mr. Porson.

The boy looked round bewildered.

"Gone," he answered; nor could they get anything more from him.

"Was your papa with you here?" asked Mrs. Porson.

He answered only with the word *Gone*, uttered in a dazed fashion.

By this time all the men left in the town were doing their best, under the direction of an intelligent man, the priest of a neighbouring parish. They had already got one or two out alive, and their own priest dead. They worked well, their terror of the lurking earthquake forgotten in their eagerness to rescue. From their ignorance of the language, however, Mr. Porson saw they could be of little use; and in dread of doing more harm than good, he judged it better to go.

They stood one moment and looked at each other in

silence. The child had dropped from the beam, and lay fast asleep across his mother's bosom, with his head on a lump of mortar. Without a word spoken, Mrs. Porson, picking her way carefully to the spot, knelt down by the dead mother, tenderly kissed her cheek, lifted the sleeping child, and with all the awe, and nearly all the tremulous joy of first motherhood, bore him to her husband. The throes of the earthquake had slain the parents, and given the child into their arms. Without look of consultation, mark of difference, or sign of agreement, they turned in silence and left the terrible church, with the clear summer sky looking in upon its dead.

As they passed the door, the sun met them shining with all his might. The sea, far away across the tops of hills and the clefts of valleys, lay basking in his glory. The hot air quivered all over the wide landscape. From the flight of steps in front of the church they looked down on the streets of the town, and beyond them into space. It looked the best of all possible worlds—as neither plague, famine, pestilence, earthquakes, nor human wrongs, persuade me it is not, judged by the high intent of its existence. When a man knows that intent, as I dare to think I do, *then* let him say, and not till then, whether it be a good world or not. That in the midst of the splendour of the sunny day, in the midst of olives and oranges, grapes and figs, ripening swiftly by the fervour of the circumambient air, should lie that charnel-church, is a terrible fact, neither to be ignored, nor to be explained by the paltry theory of the greatest good to the greatest number; but the end of the maker's dream is not this.

When they turned into the street that led to the gate, they found the donkeys standing where they had left

them. Their owner was not with them. He had gone into the church with the rest, and was killed. When they caught sight of the patient, dejected animals, unheeded and unheeding, then first they spoke, whispering in the awful stillness of the world: they must take the creatures, and make the best of their way back without a guide! They judged that, as the road was chiefly down hill, and the donkeys would be going home, they would not have much difficulty with them. At the worst, short and stout as they were, they were not bad walkers, and felt more than equal to carrying the child between them. Not a person was in the street when they mounted; almost all were in the church, at its strange, terrible service. Mrs. Porson mounted the strongest of the animals, her husband placed the sleeping child in her arms, and they started, he on foot by the side of his wife, and his donkey following. No one saw them pass through the gate of the town.

They were not sure of the way, for they had been partly asleep as they came, but so long as they went downward, and did not leave the road, they could hardly go wrong! The child slept all the way.

CHAPTER IV.

THE NEW FAMILY.

HOW shall a man describe what passed in the mind of a childless wife, with a motherless boy in her arms! It is the loveliest provision, doubtless, that every child should have a mother of his own; but there is a mother-

love—which I had almost called more divine—the love, namely, that a woman bears to a child because he is a child, regardless of whether he be her own or another's. It is that they may learn to love thus, that women have children. Some women love so without having any. No conceivable treasure of the world could have once entered into comparison with the burden of richness Mrs. Porson bore. She told afterward, with voice hushed by fear of irreverence, how, as they went down one of the hills, she slept for a moment, and dreamed that she was Mary with the holy thing in her arms, fleeing to Egypt on the ass, with Joseph, her husband, walking by her side. For years and years they had been longing for a child—and here lay the divinest little one, with every mark of the kingdom upon him! His father and mother lying crushed under the fallen dome of that fearful church, was it strange he should seem to belong to her?

But there might be some one somewhere in the world with a better claim; possibly—horrible thought!—with more need of him than she! Up started a hideous cupidity, a fierce temptation to dishonesty, such as she had never imagined. We do not know what is in us until the temptation comes. Then there is the devil to fight. And Mrs. Porson fought him.

Mr. Porson was, in a milder degree, affected much as his wife. He could not help wishing, nor was he wrong in wishing, that, since the child's father and mother were gone, they might take their place, and love their orphan. They were far from rich, but what was one child! They might surely manage to give him a good education, and set him doing for himself! But, alas, there might be others—others with love-property in the child! The

same thoughts were working in each, but neither dared utter them in the presence of the sleeping treasure.

As they descended the last slope above the town, with the wide sea-horizon before them, they beheld such a glory of after-sunset as, even on that coast, was unusual. A chord of colour that might have been the prostrate fragment of a gigantic rainbow, lay along a large arc of the horizon. The farther portion of the sea was an indigo blue, save for a grayish line that parted it from the dusky red of the sky. This red faded up through orange and dingy yellow to a pale green and pale blue, above which came the depth of the blue night, in which rayed resplendent the evening star. Below the star and nearer to the west, lay, very thin and very long, the sickle of the new moon. If death be what it looks to the unthinking soul, and if the heavens declare the glory of God, as they do indeed to the heart that knows him, then is there discord between heaven and earth such as no argument can harmonize. But death is not what men think it, for "Blessed are they that mourn for the dead."

The sight enhanced the wonder and hope of the two honest good souls in the treasure they carried. Out of the bosom of the skeleton Death himself, had been given them—into their very arms—a germ of life, a jewel of heaven! At the thought of what lay up the hill behind them, they felt their joy in the child almost wicked; but if God had taken the child's father and mother, might they not be glad in the hope that he had chosen them to replace them? That he had for the moment at least, they were bound to believe!

They travelled slowly on, through the dying sunset, and an hour or two of the star-bright night that followed,

adorned rather than lighted by the quaint boat of the crescent moon. Weary, but lapt in a voiceless triumph, they came at last, guided by the donkeys, to their hotel.

All were talking of the earthquake. A great part of the English had fled in a panic terror, like sheep that had no shepherd—hunted by their own fears, and betrayed by their imagined faith. The steadiest church-goer fled like the infidel he reviled. The fool said in his heart, "There is no God," and fled. The Christian said with his mouth, "Verily there is a God that ruleth in the earth!" and fled—far as he could from the place which, as he fancied, had shown signs of a special presence of the father of Jesus Christ.

After the Porsons were in the house, there came two or three small shocks. Every time, out with a cry rushed the inhabitants into the streets; every time, out into the garden of the hotel swarmed such as were left in it of Germans and English. But our little couple, who had that day seen so much more of its terrors than any one else in the place, and whose chamber was at the top of the house where the swaying was worst, were too much absorbed in watching and tending their lovely boy to heed the earthquake. Perhaps their hearts whispered, "Can that which has given us such a gift be unfriendly?"

"If his father and mother," said Mrs. Porson, as they stood regarding him, "are permitted to see their child, they shall see how we love him, and be willing he should love us!"

As they went up the stairs with him, the boy woke. When he looked and saw a face that was not his mother's, a cloud swept across the heaven of his eyes. He closed them again, and did not speak. The first of the shocks

came as they were putting him to bed: he turned very white and looked up fixedly, as if waiting another fall from above, but sat motionless on his new mother's lap. The instant the vibration and rocking ceased, he drank from the cup of milk she offered him, as quietly as if but a distant thunder had rolled away. When she put him in the bed, he looked at her with such an indescribable expression of bewildered loss, that she burst into tears. The child did not cry. He had not cried since they took him. The woman's heart was like to break for him, but she managed to say,

"God has taken her, my darling. He is keeping her for you, and I am going to keep you for her;" and with that she kissed him.

The same moment came the second shock.

Need wakes prophecy: the need of the child made of the parson a prophet.

"It is God that does the shaking," he said. "It's all right. Nobody will be the worse—not much, at least!"

"Not at all," rejoined the boy, and turned his face away.

From the lips of such a tiny child, the words seemed almost awful.

He fell fast asleep, and never woke till the morning. Mrs. Porson lay beside him, yielding him, stout as she was, a good half of the little Italian bed. She scarcely slept for excitement and fear of smothering him.

The Porsons were honest people, and for all their desire to possess the child, made no secret of how and where they had found him, or of as much of his name as he could tell them, which was only *Clare*. But they never heard of inquiry after him. On the gunboat at Genoa they

knew nothing of their commander's purposes, or where to seek him. Days passed before they began to be uneasy about him, and when they did make what search for him they could, it was fruitless.

CHAPTER V.

HIS NEW HOME.

THE place to which the good people carried the gift of the earthquake—carried him with much anxiety and more exultation—had no very distinctive features. It had many fields in grass, many in crop, and some lying fallow—all softly undulating. It had some trees, and everywhere hedges dividing fields whose strange shapes witnessed to a complicated history, of which few could tell anything. Here and there in the hollows between the motionless earth-billows, flowed, but did not seem to flow, what they called a brook. But the brooks there were like deep soundless pools without beginning or end. There was no life, no gaiety, no song in them, only a sullen consent to exist. That at least is how they impress one accustomed to real brooks, lark-like, always on the quiver, always on the move, always babbling and gabbling and gamboling, always at their games, always tossing their pebbles about, and telling them to talk. A man that loved them might say there was more in the silence of these, than in the speech of those; but what silence can be better than a song of delight that we are, that we were, that we are to be! The stillness may be full of solemn fish, mysterious as itself, and deaf with

secrets; but blessed is the brook that lets the light of its joy shine.

Dull as the place must seem in this my description, it was the very country for the boy. He would come into more contact with its modest beauty in a day than some of us would in a year. Nobody quite knows the beauty of a country, especially of a quiet country, except one who has been born in it, or for whom at least childhood and boyhood and youth have opened door after door into the hidden phases of its life. There is no square yard on the face of the earth but some one can in part understand what God meant in making it; while the same changeful skies canopy the most picturesque and the dullest landscapes; the same winds wake and blow over desert and pasture land, making the bosoms of youth and age swell with the delight of their blowing. The winds are not all so full as are some of delicious odours gathered as they pass from gardens, fields, and hill-sides; but all have their burden of sweetness. Those that blew upon little Clare were oftener filled with the smell of farmyards, and burning weeds, and cottage-fires, than of flowers; but never would one of such odours revisit him without bringing fresh delight to his heart. Its mere memorial suggestion far out on the great sea would wake the old child in the man. The pollards along the brooks grew lovely to his heart, and were not the less lovely when he came to understand that they were not so lovely as God had meant them to be. He was one of those who, regarding what a thing *is*, and not comparing it with other things, descry the thought of God in it, and love it; for to love what is beautiful is as natural as to love our mothers.

The parsonage to which his new father and mother brought him was like the landscape—humble. It was humble even for a parsonage—which has no occasion to be fine. For men and women whose business it is to teach their fellows to be true and fair, and not covet fine things, are but hypocrites, or at best intruders and humbugs, if they want fine things themselves. Jesus Christ did not care about fine things. He loved every lovely thing that ever his father made. If any one does not know the difference between fine things and lovely things, he does not know much, if he has all the science in the world at his finger-ends.

One good thing about the parsonage was, that it was old, and the swallows had loved it for centuries. That way Clare learned to love the swallows—and they are worth loving. Then it had a very old garden, nearly as old-fashioned as it was old, and many flowers that have almost ceased to be seen grew in it, and did not enjoy their lives the less that they were out of fashion. All the furniture in the house was old, and mostly shabby; it was possible, therefore, to love it a little. Who on earth could be such a fool as to love a new piece of furniture! One might prize it; one might admire it; one might like it because it was pretty, or because it was comfortable; but only a silly woman whose soul went to bed on her new sideboard, could say she loved it. And then it would not be true. It is impossible that any but an *old* piece of furniture should be loved.

His father and mother had a charming little room made for him in the garret, right up among the swallows, who soon admitted him a member of their society—an honorary member, that is, who was not expected to fly

with them to Africa except he liked. His new parents did this because they saw that, when he could not be with them, he preferred being by himself; and that moods came upon him in which he would steal away even from them, seized with a longing for loneliness. In general, next to being with his mother anywhere, he liked to be with his father in the study. If both went out, and could not take him with them, he would either go to his own room, or sit in the study alone. It was a very untidy room, crowded with books, mostly old and dingy, and in torn bindings. Many of them their owner never opened, and they suffered in consequence; a few of them were constantly in his hands, and suffered in consequence. All smelt strong of stale tobacco, but that hardly accounts for the fact that Clare never took to smoking. Another thing perhaps does—that he was always too much of a man to want to look like a man by imitating men. That is unmanly. A boy who wants to look like a man is not a manly boy, and men do not care for his company. A true boy is always welcome to a true man, but a would-be man is better on the other side of the wall.

His mother oftenest sat in a tiny little drawing-room, which smelt of withered rose-leaves. I think it must smell of them still. I believe it smelt of them a hundred years before she saw the place. Clare loved the smell of the rose-leaves and disliked the smell of the tobacco; yet he preferred the study with its dingy books to the pretty drawing-room without his mother.

There was a village, a very small one, in the parish, and a good many farm-houses.

Such was the place in which Clare spent the next few

years of his life, and there his new parents loved him heartily. The only thing about him that troubled them, besides the possibility of losing him, was, that they could not draw out the tiniest smile upon his sweet, moonlight-face.

CHAPTER VI.

WHAT DID DRAW OUT HIS FIRST SMILE.

MR. PORSON was a man about five and forty; his wife was a few years younger. His theories of religion were neither large nor lofty; he accepted those that were handed down to him, and did not trouble himself as to whether they were correct. He did what was better: he tried constantly to obey the law of God, whether he found it in the Bible or in his own heart. Thus he was greater in the kingdom of heaven than thousands that knew more, had better theories about God, and could talk much more fluently concerning religion than he. By obeying God he let God teach him. So his heart was always growing; and where the heart grows, there is no fear of the intellect; there it also grows, and in the best fashion of growth. He was very good to his people, and not foolishly kind. He tried his best to help them to be what they ought to be, to make them bear their troubles, be true to one another, and govern themselves. He was like a father to them. For some, of course, he could do but little, because they were locked boxes with nothing in them; but for a few he did much. Perhaps it was because he was so good to his flock that God gave him little Clare to bring up. Perhaps it was

because he and his wife were so good to Clare, that by and by a wonderful thing took place.

About three years after the earthquake, Mrs. Porson had a baby-girl sent her for her very own. The father and mother thought themselves the happiest couple on the face of the earth—and who knows but they were! If they were not, so much the better! for then, happy as they were, there were happier yet than they; and who, in his greatest happiness, would not be happier still to know that the earth held happier than he!

When Clare first saw the baby, he looked down on her with solemn, unmoved countenance, and gazed changeless for a whole minute. He thought there had been another earthquake, that another church-dome had fallen, and another child been found and brought home from the ruin. Then light began to grow somewhere under his face. His mother, full as was her heart of her new child, watched his countenance anxiously. The light under his face grew and grew, till his face was radiant. Then out of the midst of the shining broke the heavenliest smile she had ever seen on human countenance—a smile that was a clearer revelation of God than ten thousand books about him. For what must not that God be, who had made the boy that smiled such a smile and never knew it! After this he smiled occasionally, though it was but seldom. He never laughed—that is, not until years after this time; but, on the other hand, he never looked sullen. A quiet peace, like the stillness of a long summer twilight in the north, dwelt upon his visage, and appeared to model his every motion. Part of his life seemed away, and he waiting for it to come back. Then he would be merry!

He was never in a hurry, yet always doing something —always, that is, when he was not in his own room. There his mother would sometimes find him sitting absolutely still, with his hands on his knees. Nor was she sorry to surprise him thus, for then she was sure of one of his rare smiles. She thought he must then be dreaming of his own mother, and a pang would go through her at the thought that he would one day love her more than herself. "He will laugh then!" she said. She did not think how the gratitude of that mother would one day overwhelm her with gladness.

He never sought to be caressed, but always snuggled to one that drew him close. Never once did he push any one away. He learned what lessons were set him—not very fast, but with persistent endeavour to understand. He was greatly given to reading, but not particularly quick. He thus escaped much, fancying that he knew when he did not know—a quicksand into which fall so many clever boys and girls. Give me a slow, steady boy, who knows when he does not know a thing! To know that you do not know, is to be a small prophet. Such a boy has a glimmer of the something he does not know, or at least of the place where it is; while the boy who easily grasps the words that stand for a thing, is apt to think he knows the thing itself when he sees but the wrapper of it—thinks he knows the church when he has caught sight of the weather-cock. Mrs. Porson could see the understanding of a thing gradually burst into blossom on the boy's face. It did not smile, it only shone. Understanding is light; it needs love to change light into a smile.

There was something in the boy that his parents hardly

hoped to understand; something in his face that made them long to know what was going on in him, but made them doubt if ever in this life they should. He was not concealing anything from them. He did not know that he had anything to tell, or that they wanted to know anything. He never doubted that everybody saw him just as he felt himself; his soul seemed bare to all the world. But he knew little of what was passing in him: child or man never knows more than a small part of that.

When first he was allowed to take the little one in his arms, he sitting on a stool at his mother's feet, it was almost a new start in his existence. A new confidence was born in his spirit. Mrs. Porson could read, as if reflected in his countenance, the pride and tenderness that composed so much of her own conscious motherhood. A certain staidness, almost sternness, took possession of his face as he bent over the helpless creature, half on his knees, half in his arms—the sternness of a protecting divinity that knew danger not afar. He had taken a step upward in being; he was aware in himself, without knowing it, of the dignity of fatherhood. Even now he knew what so many seem never to learn, that a man is the defender of the weak; that, if a man is his brother's keeper, still more is he his sister's. She belonged to him, therefore he was hers in the slavery of love, which alone is freedom. So reverential and so careful did he show himself, that soon his mother trusted him, to the extent of his power, more than any nurse.

By and by she made the delightful discovery that, when he was alone with the baby, the silent boy could talk. Where was no need or hope of being understood, his words began to flow—with a rhythmical cadence that

seemed ever on the verge of verse. When first his mother heard the sweet murmur of his voice, she listened; and then first she learned what a hold the terrible thing that had given him into her arms had upon him. For she heard him half singing, half saying—

"Baby, baby, do not grow. Keep small, and lie on my lap, and dream of walking, but never walk; for when you walk you will run, and when you run you will go away with father and mother—away to a big place where the ground goes up to the sky; and you will go up the ground that goes up to the sky, and you will come to a big church, and you will go into the church; and the ground and the church and the sky will go *hurr, hurr, hurr;* and the sky, full of angels, will come down with a great roar; and all the yards and sails will drop out of the sky, and tumble down father and mother, and hold them down that they cannot get up again; and then you will have nobody but me. I will do all I can, but I am only brother Clare, and you will want, want, want mother and father, mother and father, and they will be always coming, and never be come, not for ever so long! Don't grow a big girl, Maly!"

The mother could not think what to say. She went in, and, in the hope of turning his thoughts aside, took the baby, and made haste to consult her husband.

"We must leave it," said Mr. Porson. "Experience will soon correct what mistake is in his notion. It is not so very far wrong. You and I must go from them one day: what is it but that the sky will fall down on us, and our bodies will get up no more! He thinks the time nearer at hand than for their sakes I hope it is; but nobody can tell."

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CLARE IS HEARD TALKING TO MALY

Clare never associated the church where the awful thing took place, with the church to which he went on Sundays. The time for it, he imagined, came to everybody. To Clare, nothing ever *happened*. The way out of the world was a church in a city set on a hill, and there an earthquake was always ready.

The heart of his adoptive mother grew yet more tender toward him after the coming of her own child. She was not quite sure that she did not love him even more than Mary. She could not help the feeling that he was a child of heaven sent out to nurse on the earth; and that it was in reward for her care of him that her own darling was sent her. That their love to the boy had something to do with the coming of the girl, I believe myself, though what that something was, I do not precisely understand.

She left him less often alone with the child. She would not have his thoughts drawn to the church of the earthquake; neither would she have the mournfulness of his sweet voice much in the ears of her baby. He never sang in a minor key when any one was by, but always and solely when the baby and he were alone together.

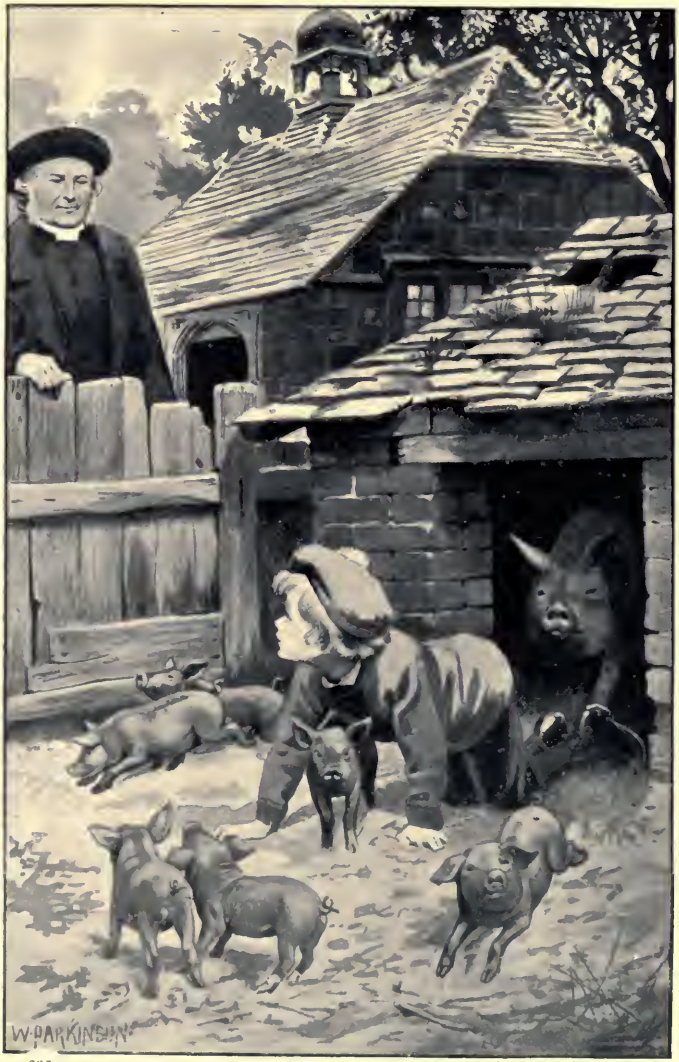
CHAPTER VII.

CLARE AND HIS BROTHERS.

AFTER a year or two, Mr. Porson became anxious lest the boy should grow up too unlike other boys—lest he should not be manly, but of a too gently sad behaviour. He began, therefore, to take him with him about the parish, and was delighted to find him show

extraordinary endurance. He would walk many miles, and come home less fatigued than his companion. To be sure, he had not much weight to carry; but it seemed to Mr. Porson that his utter freedom from thought about himself had a large share in his immunity from weariness. He continued slight and thin—which was natural, for he was growing fast; but the muscles of his little bird-like legs seemed of steel. The spindle-shanks went striding, striding without a check, along the roughest roads, the pale face shining atop of them like a sweet calm moon. To Mr. Porson's eyes, the moon, stooping, as she sometimes seems to do, downward from the sky, always looked like him. The child woke something new in the heart and mind of every one that loved him, but was himself unconscious of his influence. His company was no check to his father when meditating, after his habit as he walked, what he should say to his people the next Sunday. For the good man never wrote or read a sermon, but talked to his people as one who would meet what was in them with what was in him. Hence they always believed "the parson meant it." He never said anything clever, and never said anything unwise; never amused them, and never made them feel scornful, either of him or of any one else.

Instead of finding the presence of Clare distract his thoughts, he had at times a curious sense that the boy was teaching him—that his sermon was running before, or walking sedately on this side of him or that. For Clare could run like the wind; and did run after butterflies, dragon-flies, or anything that offered a chance of seeing it nearer; but he never killed, and seldom tried to catch anything, if but for a moment's examination. The



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CLARE MAKES FRIENDS DURING MR. PORSON'S ABSENCE

swiftest run would scarcely heighten the colour of his pale cheeks.

He soon came to be known in the farm-houses of the parish. The farmer-families were a little shy of him at first, fancying him too fine a little gentleman for them; but as they got to know him, they grew fond of him. They called him "the parson's man," which pleased Clare. But one old woman called him "the parson's cherubim."

One day Mr. Porson was calling at the house of the largest farm in the parish, the nearest house to the parsonage. The farmer's wife was ill, and having to go to her room to see her, he said to the boy—

"Clare, you run into the yard. Give my compliments to any one you meet, and ask him to let you stay with him."

When the time came for their departure, Mr. Porson went to find him. He did not call him; he wanted to see what he was about. Unable to discover him, and coming upon no one of whom he might inquire, for it was hay-time and everybody in the fields, he was at last driven to use his voice.

He had not to call twice. Out of the covered part of the pigsty, not far from which the parson stood, the boy came creeping on all fours, followed by a litter of half-grown, grunting, gamboling pigs.

"Here I am, papa!" he cried.

"Clare," exclaimed his father, "what a mess you have made of yourself!"

"I gave them your compliments," answered the boy, as he scrambled over the fence with his father's assistance, "and asked them if I might stay with them till you were ready. They said yes, and invited me in. I went in; and

we've been having such games! They were very kind to me."

His father turned involuntarily and looked into the sty. There stood all the pigs in a row, gazing after the boy, and looking as sorry as their thick skins and bony snouts would let them. Their mother rose in a ridge behind them, gazing too. Mr. Skymer always spoke of pigs as about the most intelligent animals in the world.

I do not know when or where or how his love of the animals began, for he could not tell me. If it began with the pigs, it was far from ending with them.

The next day he asked his father if he might go and call upon the pigs.

"Have you forgotten, Clare," said his mother, "what a job Susan and I had with your clothes? I wonder still how you could have done such a thing! They were quite filthy. When I saw you, I had half a mind to put you in a bath, clothes and all. I doubt if they are sweet yet!"

"Oh, yes, they are, indeed, mamma!" returned Clare; "and you know I shall be careful after this! I shall not go into their house, but get the farmer to let them out. I've thought of a new game with them!"

His mother consented; the farmer did let the pigs out; and Clare and they had a right good game together among the ricks in the yard.

His growing nature showed itself in a swiftly widening friendship for live things. The spreading ripples of his affection took in the cows and the horses, the hens and the geese, and every creature about the place, till at length it had to pull up at the moles, because he could not get at them. I doubt if he would have liked them if he had seen one eat a frog! He called the pigs little brothers,

and the horses and cows big brothers, and was perfectly at home with them before people knew he cared for their company. I think his absolute simplicity brought him near to the fountain of life, or rather, prevented him from straying from it; and this kept him so alive himself, that he was delicately sensitive to all life. He felt himself pledged to all other life as being one with it. Its forms were therefore so open to him as to seem familiar from the first. He knew instinctively what went on in regions of life differing from his own—knew, without knowing how, what the animals were thinking and feeling; so was able to interpret their motions, even the sudden changes in their behaviour.

There was one dangerous animal on the place—a bull, of which the farmer had often said he must part with him, or he would be the death of somebody. One morning he was struck with terror to find Clare in the stall with Nimrod. The brute was chained up pretty short, but was free enough for terrible mischief: Clare was stroking his nose, and the beast was standing as still as a bull of bronze, with one curved and one sharp, forward-set, wicked-looking horn in alarming proximity to the angelic face. The farmer stood in dismay, still as the bull, afraid to move. Clare looked up and smiled, but his delicate little hand went on caressing the huge head. It was one of God's small high creatures visiting with good news of hope one of his big low creatures—a little brother of Jesus Christ bringing a taste of his father's kingdom to his great dull bull of a brother. The farmer called him. The boy came at once. Mr. Goodenough told him he must not go near the bull; he was fierce and dangerous. Clare informed him that he and the bull had been friends

for a long time; and to prove it ran back, and before the farmer could lay hold of him, was perched on the animal's shoulders. The bull went on eating the grass in the manger before him, and took as little heed of the boy as if it were but a fly that had lighted on him, and neither tickled nor stung him.

By degrees he grew familiar with all the goings on at the farm, and drew nearer to a true relation with the earth that nourishes all. Where the soil was not too heavy, the ploughman would set him on the back of the near horse, and there he would ride in triumph to the music of the ploughman's whistle behind. His was not the pomp of the destroyer who rides trampling, but the pomp of the saviour drawing forth life from the earth. In the summer the hayfield knew him, and in the autumn the harvest-field, where busily he gathered what the earth gave, and for himself strength, a sense of wide life and large relations. The very mould, not to say the grass-blades and the daisies, was dear to him. He was more sympathetic with the daisies ploughed down than was even Burns, for he had a strong feeling that they went somewhere, and were the better for going; that this was the way their sky fell upon them.

All the people on the farm, all the people of the village, every one in the parish knew the boy and his story. From his gentleness and lovingkindness to live things, there were who said he was half-witted; others said he saw ghosts. The boys of the village despised, and some hated him, because he was so unlike them. They called him a girl because where they tormented he caressed. At this he would smile, and they durst not lay hands on him.

The days are long in boyhood, and Clare could do a many things in one. There was the morning, the forenoon, and the long afternoon and evening! He could help on the farm; he could play with ever so many animals; he could learn his lessons, which happily were not heavy; he could read any book he pleased in his father's library, where *Paradise Lost* was his favourite; he could nurse little Maly. He had the more time for all these that he had no companion of his own age, no one he wanted to go about with after school-hours. His father was still his chief human companion, and neither of them grew tired of the other.

The most remarkable thing in the child was the calm and gentle greatness of his heart. You often find children very fond of one or two people, who, perhaps, in evil return, want to keep them all to themselves, and reproach them for loving others. Many persons count it a sign of depth in a child that he loves only one or two. I doubt it greatly. I think that only the child who loves all life can love right well, can love deeply and strongly and tenderly the lives that come nearest him. Low nurses and small-hearted mothers dwarf and pervert their children, doing their worst to keep them from having big hearts like God. Clare had other teaching than this. He had lost his father and mother, but many were given him to love; and so he was helped to wait patiently till he found them again. God was keeping them for him somewhere, and keeping him for them here.

The good for which we are born into this world is, that we may learn to love. I think Clare the most enviable of boys, because he loved more than any one of his age I have heard of. There are people—oh, such

silly people they are!—though they may sometimes be pleasing—who are always wanting people to love them. They think so much of themselves, that they want to think more; and to know that people love them makes them able to think more of themselves. They even think themselves loving because they are fond of being loved! You might as soon say because a man loves money he is generous; because he loves to gather, therefore he knows how to scatter; because he likes to read a story, therefore he can write one. Such lovers are only selfish in a deeper way, and are more to blame than other selfish people; for, loving to be loved, they ought the better to know what an evil thing it is not to love; what a mean thing to accept what they are not willing to give. Even to love only those that love us, is, as the Lord has taught us, but a pinched and sneaking way of loving. Clare never thought about being loved. He was too busy loving, with so many about him to love, to think of himself. He was not the contemptible little wretch to say, "What a fine boy I am, to make everybody love me!" If he had been capable of that, not many would have loved him; and those that did would most of them have got tired of loving a thing that did not love again. Only great lovers like God are able to do that, and they help God to make love grow. But there is little truth in love where there is no wisdom in it. Clare's father and mother were wise, and did what they could to make Clare wise.

Also the animals, though they were not aware of it, did much to save him from being spoiled by the humans whom the boy loved more than them. For Clare's charity began at home. Those who love their own people will

love other people. Those who do not love children will never love animals right.

Here I will set down a strange thing that befell Clare, and caused him a sore heart, making him feel like a traitor to the whole animal race, and influencing his life for ever. I was at first puzzled to account for the thing without attributing more imagination to the animals—or some of them—than I had been prepared to do; but probably the main factor in it was heart-disease.

He had seen men go out shooting, but had never accompanied any killers. I do not quite understand how, as in my story, he came even to imitate using a gun. There was nothing in him that belonged to killing; and that is more than I could say for myself, or any other man I know except Clare Skymer.

He was at the bottom of the garden one afternoon, where nothing but a low hedge came between him and a field of long grass. He had in his hand the stick of a worn-out umbrella. Suddenly a half-grown rabbit rose in the grass before him, and bolted. From sheer unconscious imitation, I believe, he raised the stick to his shoulder, and said *Bang*. The rabbit gave a great bound into the air, fell, and lay motionless. With far other feelings than those of a sportsman, Clare ran, got through the hedge, and approached the rabbit trembling. He could think nothing but that the creature was playing him a trick. Yet he was frightened. Only how could he have hurt him!

"I dare say the little one knows me," he said to himself, "and wanted to give me a start! He couldn't tell what a start it would be, or he wouldn't have done it"

When he drew near, however, "the little one" did not, as he had hoped and expected, jump up and run again. With sinking heart Clare went close up, and looked down on it. It lay stretched out, motionless. With death in his own bosom he stooped and tenderly lifted it. The rabbit was stone-dead! The poor boy gazed at it, pressed it tenderly to his heart, and went with it to find his mother. The tears kept pouring down his face, but he uttered no cry till he came to her. Then a low groaning howl burst from him; he laid the dead thing in her lap, and threw himself on the floor at her feet in an abandonment of self-accusation and despair.

It was long before he was able to give her an intelligible account of what had taken place. She asked him if he had found it dead. In answer he could only shake his head, but that head-shake had a whole tragedy in it. Then she examined "the little one," but could find no mark of any wound upon it. When at length she learned how the case was, she tried to comfort him, insisting he was not to blame, for he did not mean to kill the little one. He would not hearken to her loving sophistry.

"No, mother!" he said through his sobs; "I wouldn't have blamed myself, though I should have been very sorry, if I had killed him by accident—if I had stepped upon him, or anything of that kind; but I meant to frighten him! I looked bad at him! I made him think I was an enemy, and going to kill him! I shammed bad —and so was real bad."

He stopped with a most wailful howl.

"Perhaps he knew me," he resumed, "and couldn't understand it. It was much worse than if I had shot him. He wouldn't have known then till he was dead.

But to die of terror was horrible. Oh, why didn't I think what I was doing?"

"Nobody could have thought of such a thing happening."

"No; but I ought to have thought, mother, of what I was doing. I was trying to frighten him! I must have been in a cruel mood. Why didn't I think love to the little one when I saw him, instead of thinking death to him? I shall never look a rabbit in the face again! My heart must have grown black, mother!"

"I don't believe there is another rabbit in England would die from such a cause," persisted his mother thoughtfully.

"Then what a superior rabbit he must have been!" said Clare. "To think that I pulled down the roof of his church upon him!"

He burst into a torrent of tears, and ran to his own room. There his mother thought it better to leave him undisturbed. She wisely judged that a mind of such sensibility was alone capable of finding the comfort to fit its need.

Such comfort he doubtless did find, for by the time his mother called him to tea, calmness had taken the place of the agony on his countenance. His mother asked him no questions, for she as well as her husband feared any possible encouragement to self-consciousness. I imagine the boy had reflected that things could not go so wrong that nobody could set them right. I imagine he thought that, if he had done the rabbit a wrong, as he never for a moment to the end of his life doubted he had, he who is at the head of all heads and the heart of all hearts, would contrive to let him tell the rabbit he was sorry,

and would give him something to do for the rabbit that would make up for his cruelty to him. He did once say to his mother, and neither of them again alluded to the matter, that he was sure the rabbit had forgiven him.

"Little ones are *so* forgiving, you know, mother!" he added.

Is it any wonder that my friend Clare Skymer should have been no sportsman?

CHAPTER VIII.

CLARE AND HIS HUMAN BROTHERS.

ANOTHER anecdote of him, that has no furtherance of the story in it, I must yet tell.

One cold day in a stormy March, the wind was wildly blowing broken clouds across the heavens, and now rain, now sleet, over the shivering blades of the young corn, whose tender green was just tinging the dark brown earth. The fields were now dark and wintry, heartless and cold; now shining all over as with repentant tears; one moment refusing to be comforted, and the next reviving with hope and a sense of new life. Clare was hovering about the plough. Suddenly he spied, from a mound in the field, a little procession passing along the highway. Those in front carried something on their shoulders which must be heavy, for it took six of them to carry it. He knew it was a coffin, for his home was by the churchyard, and a funeral was no unfamiliar sight. Behind it one man walked alone. For a moment Clare watched

him, and saw his bowed head and heavy pace. His heart filled from its own perennial fount of pity, which was God himself in him. He ran down the hill and across the next field, making for a spot some distance ahead of the procession. As it passed him, he joined the chief mourner, who went plodding on with his arms hanging by his sides. Creeping close up to him, he slid his little soft hand into the great horny hand of the peasant. Instinctively the big hand closed upon the small one, and the weather-beaten face of a man of fifty looked down on the boy. Not a word was said between them. They walked on, hand in hand.

Neither had ever seen the other. The man was following his wife and his one child to the grave. "Nothing almost sees miracles but misery," says Kent in *King Lear*. Because this man was miserable, he saw a miracle where was no miracle, only something very good. The thing was true and precious, yea, a message from heaven. Those deep, upturned, silent eyes; the profound, divine sympathy that shone in them; the grasp of the tiny hand upon his large fingers, made the heart of the man, who happened to be a catholic, imagine, and for a few moments believe, that he held the hand of the infant Saviour. The cloud lifted from his heart and brain, and did not return when he came to understand that this was not *the* lamb of God, only another lamb from the same fold.

When they had walked about two miles, the boy began to fear he might be intruding, and would have taken his hand from the other, but the man held it tight, and stooping whispered it was not far now. The child, who, without knowing it, had taken the man under the protection of his love, yielded at once, went with him to the

grave, joined in the service, and saw the grave filled. They went again as they had come. Not a word was spoken. The man wept a little now and then, drew the back of his brown hand across his eyes, and pressed a little closer the hand he held. At the gate of the parsonage the boy took his leave. He said they would be wondering what had become of him, or he would have gone farther. The man released him without a word.

His mother had been uneasy about him, but when he told her how it was, she said he had done right.

"Yes," returned the boy; "I belong there myself."

The mother knew he was not thinking of the grave.

One more anecdote I will give, serving to introduce the narrative of the following chapter, and helping to show the character of the boy. He was so unlike most boys, that one must know all he may about him, if he would understand him.

Never yet, strange as the assertion must seem, had the boy shown any anger. His father was a little troubled at the fact, fearing such absence of resentment might indicate moral indifference, or, if not, might yet render him incapable of coping with the world. He had himself been brought up at a public school, and had not, with all his experience of life, come to see, any more than most of the readers of this story now see, or for a long time will see, that there lies no nobility, no dignity in evil retort of any kind; that evil is evil when returned as much as when given; that the only shining thing is good—and the most shining, good for evil.

One day a coarse boy in the village gave him a sharp blow on the face. It forced water from his eyes and blood from his nose. He was wiping away both at once

with his handkerchief, when a kindly girl stopped and said to him—

"Never mind; don't cry."

"Oh, no!" answered Clare; "it's only water, it's not crying. It would be cowardly to cry."

"That's a brave boy! You'll give it him back one of these days."

"No," he returned, "I shall not. I couldn't."

"Why?"

"Because it hurts so. My nose feels as if it were broken. I know it's not broken, but it feels like it."

The girl, as well as the boys who stood around him, burst into laughter. They saw no logic in his reasoning. Clare's was the divine reasoning that comes of loving your neighbour; theirs was the earthly reasoning that came of loving themselves. They did not see that to Clare another boy was another of himself; that he was carrying out the design of the Father of men, that his creatures should come together into one, not push each other away.

The next time he met the boy who struck him, so far was he both from resentment and from the fear of being misunderstood, that he offered him a rosy-cheeked apple his mother had given him as he left for school. The boy was tyrant and sneak together—a combination to be seen sometimes in a working man set over his fellows, and in a rich man grown poor, and bent upon making money again. The boy took the apple, never doubted Clare gave it him to curry favour, ate it up grinning, and threw the core in his face. Clare turned away with a sigh, and betook himself to his handkerchief again. The boy burst into a guffaw of hideous laughter.

CHAPTER IX.

CLARE THE DEFENDER.

THIS enemy was a trouble, more or less, to every decent person in the neighbourhood. It was well his mother was a widow, for where she was only powerless to restrain, the father would have encouraged. He was a big, idle, sneering, insolent lad—such that had there been two more of the sort, they would have made the village uninhabitable. It was all the peaceable vicar could do to keep his hands off him.

One day, little Mary being then about five years old, Clare had her out for a walk. They were alone in a narrow lane, not far from the farm where Clare was so much at home. To his consternation, for he had his sister in charge, down the lane, meeting them, came the village tyrant. He strolled up with his hands in his pockets, and barred their way. But while, his eye chiefly on Clare, he "straddled" like Apollyon, but not "quite over the whole breadth of the way," Mary slipped past him. The young brute darted after the child. Clare put down his head, as he had seen the rams do, and as Simpson, who ill deserved the name of the generous Jewish Hercules, was on the point of laying hold of her, caught him in the flank, butted him into the ditch, and fell on the top of him.

"Run, Maly!" he cried; "I'll be after you in a moment."

"Will you, you little devil!" cried the bully; and taking him by the throat, so that he could not utter even a gurgle, got up and began to beat him unmercifully.

But the sounds of their conflict had reached the ears of the bull Nimrod, who was feeding within the hedge. He recognized Clare's voice, perhaps knew from it that he was in trouble; but I am inclined to think pure bull-love of a row would alone have sent him tearing to the quarter whence the tyrant's brutal bellowing still came. There, looking over the hedge, he saw his friend in the clutches of an enemy of his own, for Simpson never lost a chance of teasing Nimrod when he could do so with safety. Over he came with a short roar and a crash. Looking up, the bully saw a bigger bully than himself, with his head down and horns level, retreating a step or two in preparation for running at him. Simpson shoved the helpless Clare toward the enemy and fled. Clare fell. Nimrod jumped over his prostrate friend and tore after Simpson. Clare got up and would at once have followed to protect his enemy, but that he must first see his sister safe. He ran with her to a cottage hard by, handed her to the woman at the door of it, and turning pursued Simpson and the bull.

Nimrod overtook his enemy in the act of scrambling over a five-barred gate. Simpson saw the head of the bull coming down upon him like the bows of a Dutchman upon a fishing-boat, and, paralyzed with terror, could not move an inch further. Crash against the gate came the horns of Nimrod, with all the weight and speed of his body behind them. Away went the gate into the field, and away went Simpson and the bull with it, the latter nearly breaking his neck, for his horns were entangled in the bars, one of them by the diagonal bar. Simpson's right leg was jammed betwixt the gate and the head and horns of the bull. He roared, and his roars maddened

Nimrod, furious already that he could not get his horns clear. Shake and pull as he might, the gate stuck to them; and Simpson fared little the better that the bull's quarrel was for the moment with the gate, and not with the leg between him and it.

Clare had not seen the catastrophe, and did not know what had become of pursuer or pursued, until he reached the gap where the gate had been. He saw then the odd struggle going on, and ran to the aid of his foe, in terror of what might already have befallen him. The moment he laid hold of one of the animal's horns, infuriated as Nimrod was with his helpless entanglement, he knew at once who it was, and was quiet; for Clare always took him by the horn when first he went up to him. Without a moment's demur he yielded to the small hands as they pushed and pulled his head this way and that until they got it clear of the gate. But then they did not let him go. Clare proceeded to take him home, and Nimrod made no objection. Simpson lay groaning.

When Clare returned, his enemy was there still. He had got clear of the gate, but seemed in much pain, for he lay tearing up the grass and sod in handfuls. When Clare stooped to ask what he should do for him, he struck him a backhanded blow on the face that knocked him over. Clare got up and ran.

"Coward!" cried Simpson; "to leave a man with a broken leg to get home by himself!"

"I'm going to find some one strong enough to help you," said Clare.

But Simpson, after his own evil nature, imagined he was going to let the bull into the field again, and fell to praying him not to leave him. Clare knew, however,

that, if his leg was broken, he could not get him home, neither could he get home by himself; so he made haste to tell the people at the farm, and Simpson lay in terror of the bull till help came.

From that hour he hated Clare, attributing to him all the ill he had brought on himself. But he was out of mischief for a while. The trouble fell on his mother—who deserved it, for she would believe no ill of him, because he was *hers*. One good thing of the affair was, that the bully was crippled for life, and could do the less harm.

It was a great joy to Mr. Porson to learn how Clare had defended his sister. Clergyman as he was, and knowing that Jesus Christ would never have returned a blow, and that this spirit of the Lord was what saved the world, he had been uneasy that his adopted child behaved just like Jesus. That a man should be so made as not to care to return a blow, never occurred to Mr. Porson as possible. It was therefore an immeasurable relief to his feelings as an Englishman, to find that the boy was so far from being destitute of pluck, that in defence of his sister he had attacked a fellow twice his size.

"Weren't you afraid of such a big rascal?" he said.

"No, papa," answered the boy. "Ought I to have been?"

He put his hand to his forehead, as if trying to understand. His father found he had himself something to think about.

There was a certain quiescence about Clare, ill to describe, impossible to explain, but not the less manifest. Like an infant, he never showed surprise at anything. Whatever came to him he received, questioning nothing,

marvelling at nothing, disputing nothing. What he was told to do he went to do, never with even a momentary show of disinclination, leaving book or game with readiness but no eagerness. He would do deftly what was required of him, and return to his place, with a countenance calm and sweet as the moon in highest heaven. He seldom offered a caress except to little Mary; yet would choose, before anything else, a place by his mother's knee. The moment she, or his father in her absence, entered the room and sat down, he would rise, take his stool, and set it as near as he thought he might. When caressed he never turned away, or looked as if he would rather be let alone; at the same time he received the caress so quietly, and with so little response, that often, when his heavenly look had drawn the heart of some mother, or spinster with motherly heart, he left an ache in the spirit he would have gone to the world's end to comfort. He never sought love—otherwise than by getting near the loved. When anything was given him, he would look up and smile, but he seldom showed much pleasure, or went beyond the regulation thanks. But if at such a moment little Mary were by, he had a curious way of catching her up and presenting her to the giver. Whether this was a shape his thanks took, whether Mary was to him an incorporate gratitude, or whether he meant to imply that she was the fitter on whom to shower favour, it were hard to say. His mother observed, and in her mind put the two things together, that he did not seem to prize much any mere possession. He looked pleased with a new suit of clothes, but if any one remarked on his care of them, he would answer, "I mustn't spoil what's papa and mamma's!" He made no hoard of any kind. He did

once hoard marbles till he had about a hundred; then it was discovered that they were for a certain boy in the village who was counted half-witted—as indeed was Clare himself by many. When he learned that the boy had first been accused of stealing them—for no one would believe that another boy had given them to him—and after that robbed of them by the other boys, on the ground that he did not know how to play with them, Clare saw that it was as foolish to hoard for another as for himself.

He was a favourite with few beyond those that knew him well. Many who saw him only at church, or about the village, did not take to him. His still regard repelled them. In Naples they would have said he had the evil eye. I think people had a vague sense of rebuke in his presence. Even his mother, passionately loving her foundling, was aware of a film between them through which she could not quite see him, beyond which there was something she could not get at. Clare knew nothing of such a separation. He seemed to himself altogether close to his mother, was aware of nothing between to part them. The cause of the thing was, that Clare was not yet in flower. His soul was a white half-blown bud, not knowing that it was but half-blown. It basked in the glory of the warm sun, but only with the underside of its flower-leaves; it had not opened its heart, the sun-side of its petals, to the love in which it was immerged. He received the love as a matter of course, and loved it as a matter of course. But for the cruel Simpson he would not have known there could be any other way of things. He did not yet know that one must not only love but mean to love, must not only bask in the warmth of love,

but know it as love, and where it comes from—love again the fountain whence it flows.

CHAPTER X.

THE BLACK AUNT.

CLARE was yet in his tenth year when an unhealthy summer came. The sun was bright and warm as in other summers, and the flowers in field and garden appeared as usual when the hour arrived for them to wake and look abroad; but the children of men did not fare so well as the children of the earth. A peculiar form of fever showed itself in the village. It was not very fatal, yet many were so affected as to be long unable to work. There was consequently much distress beyond the suffering of the fever itself. The parson and his wife went about from morning to night among the cottagers, helping everybody that needed help. They had no private fortune, but the small blanket of the benefice they spread freely over as many as it could be stretched to cover, depriving themselves of a good part of the food to which they had been accustomed, and of several degrees of necessary warmth. When at last the strength of the parson gave way, and the fever laid hold of him, he had to do without many comforts his wife would gladly have got for him. They were both of rather humble origin, having but one relative well-to-do, a sister of Mrs. Porson, who had married a rich but very common man. From her they could not ask help. She had never sent them any

little present, and had been fiercely indignant with them for adopting Clare.

Neither of them once complained, though Mrs. Porson, whose strength was much spent, could not help weeping sometimes when she was alone and free to weep. They knew their Lord did not live in luxury, and a secret gladness nestled in their hearts that they were allowed to suffer a little with him for the sake of the flock he had given into their charge.

The children of course had to share in the general gloom, but it did not trouble them much. For Clare, he was not easily troubled with anything. Always ready to help, he did not much realize what suffering was; and he had Mary to look after, which was labour and pleasure, work and play and pay all in one. His mother was at ease concerning her child when she knew her in Clare's charge, and was free to attend to her husband. She often said that if ever any were paid for being good to themselves, she and her husband were vastly overpaid for taking such a child from the shuddering arms of the earthquake.

But John Porson's hour was come. He must leave wife and children and parish, and go to him who had sent him. If any one think it hard he should so fare in doing his duty, let him be silent till he learn what the parson himself thought of the matter when he got home. People talk about death as the gosling might about life before it chips its egg. Take up their way of lamentation, and we shall find it an endless injustice to have to get up every morning and go to bed every night. Mrs. Porson wept, but never thought him or herself ill-used. And had she been low enough to indulge in self-pity, it would

have been thrown away, for before she had time to wonder how she was to live and rear her children, she too was sent for. In this world she was not one of those mothers of little faith who trust God for themselves but not for their children, and when again with her husband, she would not trust God less.

Clare was in the garden when Sarah told him she was dead. He stood still for a moment, then looked up, up into the blue. Why he looked up, he could not have told; but ever since that terrible morning of which the vague burning memory had never passed, when the great dome into which he was gazing, burst and fell, he had a way every now and then of standing still and looking up. His face was white. Two slow tears gathered, rolled over, and dried upon his face. He turned to Mary, lifted her in his arms, and, carrying her about the garden, once more told her his strange version of what had happened in his childhood. Then he told her that her papa and mamma had gone to look for his papa and mamma—"somewhere up in the dome," he said.

When they wanted to take Mary to see what was left of her mother, the boy contrived to prevent them. From morning till night he never lost sight of the child.

One cold noon in October, when the clouds were miles deep in front of the sun, when the rain was falling thick on the yellow leaves, and all the paths were miry, the two children sat by the kitchen fire. Sarah was cooking their mid-day meal, which had come from her own pocket. She was the only servant either of them had known in the house, and she would not leave it until some one should take charge of them. The neighbours, dreading infection, did not come near them. Clare sat on

a little stool with Mary on his knees, nestling in his bosom; but he felt dreary, for he saw no love-firmament over him; the cloud of death hid it.

With a sudden jingle and rattle, up drove a rickety post-chaise to the door of the parsonage. Out of it, and into the kitchen, came stalking a tall middle-aged woman, in a long black cloak, black bonnet, and black gloves, with a face at once stern and peevish.

"I am the late Mrs. Porson's sister," she said, and stood.

Sarah courtesied and waited. Clare rose, with Mary in his arms.

"This is little Maly, ma'am," he said, offering her the child.

"Set her down, and let me see her," she answered.

Clare obeyed. Mary put her finger in her mouth, and began to cry. She did not like the look of the black aunt, and was not used to a harsh voice.

"Tut! tut!" said the black aunt. "Crying already! That will never do! Show me her things."

Sarah felt stunned. This was worse than death! "If only the mistress had taken them with her!" she said to herself.

Mary's things—they were not many—were soon packed. Within an hour she was borne off, shrieking, struggling, and calling Clay. The black aunt, however, —as the black aunt Clare always thought of her—cared nothing for her resistance; and Clare, who at her first cry was rushing to the rescue, ready once more to do battle for her, was seized and held back by Farmer Good-enough. Sarah had sent for him, and he had come—just in time to frustrate Clare's valour.

The carriage was not yet out of sight, when Farmer Goodenough began to repent that he had come: his presence was an acknowledgment of responsibility! Something must be done with the foundling! There was nobody to claim him, and nobody wanted him! He had always liked the boy, but he did not want him! His wife was not fond of the boy, nor of any boy, and did not want him! He had said to her that Clare could not be left to starve, and she had answered, "Why not?"! What was to be done with him? Nobody knew—any more than Clare himself. But which of us knows what is going to be done with him?

Clare was nobody's business. English farmers no more than French are proverbial for generosity; and Farmer Goodenough, no bad type of his class, had a wife in whose thoughts not the pence but the farthings dominated. She was one who at once recoiled and repelled—one of those whose skin shrinks from the skin of their kind, and who are specially apt to take unaccountable dislikes—a pitiable human animal of the leprous sort. She "never took to the foundling," she said. To have neither father nor mother, she counted disreputable. But I believe the main source of her dislike to Clare was a feeling of undefined reproof in the very atmosphere of the boy's presence, his nature was so different from hers. What urged him toward his fellow-creatures, made her draw back from him. In truth she hated the boy. The very look of him made her sick, she said. It was only a certain respect for the parson, and a certain fear of her husband, who, seldom angry, was yet capable of fury, that had prevented her from driving the child, "with his dish-clout face," off the premises, whenever she saw him from door

or window. It was no wonder the farmer should be at his wits' end to know what, as churchwarden, guardian of the poor, and friend of the late vicar—as friendly also to the boy himself, he was bound to do.

"Where are *you* going?" he asked Sarah.

"Where the Lord wills," answered the old woman. Her ark had gone to pieces, and she hardly cared what became of her.

"We've got to look to ourselves!" said the farmer.

"Parson used to say there was One as took that off our hands!" replied Sarah.

"Yes, yes," assented Mr. Goodenough, fidgeting a little; "but the Almighty helps them as helps themselves, and that's sound doctrine. You really must do something, Sarah! We can't have you on the parish, you know!"

"I beg your pardon, sir, but until the child here is provided for, or until they turn us out of the parsonage, I will not leave the place."

"The furniture is advertised for sale. You'll have nothing but the bare walls!"

"We'll manage to keep each other warm!—Shan't we, Clare?"

"I will try to keep you warm, Sarah," responded the boy sadly.

"But the new parson will soon be here. Our souls must be cared for!"

"Is the Lord's child that came from heaven in an earthquake to be turned out into the cold for fear the souls of big men should perish?"

"Something must be done about it!" said the farmer. "What it's to be I can't tell! It's no business o' mine any way!"

"That's what the priest, and the Levite, and the farmer says!" returned Sarah.

"Won't you ask Mr. Goodenough to stay to dinner?" said Clare.

He went up to the farmer, who in his perplexity had seated himself, and laid his arm on his shoulder.

"No, I can't," answered Sarah. "He would eat all we have, and not have enough!"

"Now Maly is gone," returned Clare, "I would rather not have any dinner."

The farmer's old feeling for the boy, which the dread of having him left on his hands had for the time dulled, came back.

"Get him his dinner, Sarah," he said. "I've something to see to in the village. By the time I come back, he'll be ready to go with me, perhaps."

"God bless you, sir!" cried Sarah. "You meant it all the time, an' I been behavin' like a brute!"

The farmer did not like being taken up so sharply. He had promised nothing! But he had nearly made up his mind that, as the friend of the late parson, he could scarcely do less than give shelter to the child until he found another refuge. True, he was not the parson's child, but he had loved him as his own! He would make the boy useful, and so shut his wife's mouth! There were many things Clare could do about the place!

CHAPTER XI.

CLARE ON THE FARM.

WHEN Mr. Goodenough appeared at the house-door with the boy, his wife's face expressed what her tongue dared not utter without some heating of the furnace behind it. But Clare never saw that he was unwelcome. He had not begun to note outward and visible signs in regard to his own species; his observation was confined to the animals, to whose every motion and look he gave heed. But he was hardly aware of watching even them: his love made it so natural to watch, and so easy to understand them! He was not drawn to study Mrs. Goodenough, or to read her indications; he was content to hear what she said.

True to her nature, Mrs. Goodenough, seeing she could not at once get rid of the boy, did her endeavour to make him pay for his keep. Nominally he continued to attend the village school, where the old master was doing his best for him; but, oftener than not, she interposed to prevent his going, and turned him to use about the house, the dairy, and the poultry-yard.

His new mode of life occasioned him no sense of hardship. I do not mean because of his patient acceptance of everything that came; but because he had been so long accustomed to the ways of a farm, to all the phases of life and work in yard and field, that nothing there came strange to him—except having to stick to what he was put to, and having next to no time to read. Many boys who have found much amusement in doing this or that, find

it irksome the moment it is required of them: Clare was not of that mean sort; he was a gentleman. Happily he was put to no work beyond his strength.

At first, and for some time, he had to do only with the creatures more immediately under the care of "the mistress," whence his acquaintance with the poultry and the pigs, the pigeons and the calves—and specially with such as were delicate or had been hurt—with their ways of thinking and their carriage and conduct, rapidly increased.

By and by, however, having already almost ceased to attend school, the farmer, requiring some passing help a boy could give, took him from his wife—not without complaint on her part, neither without sense of relief, and would not part with him again. He was so quick in doing what was required, so intelligent to catch the meaning not always thoroughly expressed, so cheerful, and so willing, that he was a pleasure to Mr. Goodenough —and no less a pleasure to the farmer that dwelt in Mr. Goodenough, and seemed to most men all there was of him; for, instead of an expense, he found him a saving.

It was much more pleasant for Clare to be with his master than with his mistress, but he fared the worse for it in the house. The woman's dislike of the boy must find outlet; and as, instead of flowing all day long, it was now pent up the greater part of it, the stronger it issued when he came home to his meals. I will not defile my page with a record of the modes in which she vented her spite. It sought at times such minuteness of indulgence, that it was next to impossible for any one to perceive its embodiments except the boy himself.

He now came more into contact with the larger

animals about the place; and the comfort he derived from them was greater than most people would readily or perhaps willingly believe. He had kept up his relations with Nimrod, the bull, and there was never a breach of the friendship between them. The people about the farm not unfrequently sought his influence with the animal, for at times they dared hardly approach him. Clare even made him useful—got a little work out of him now and then. But his main interest lay in the horses. He had up to this time known rather less of them than of the other creatures on the place; now he had to give his chief attention to them, laying in love the foundation of that knowledge which afterward stood him in such stead when he came to dwell for a time among certain eastern tribes whose horses are their chief gladness and care. He used, when alone with them, to talk to this one or that about the friends he had lost—his father and mother and Maly and Sarah—and did not mind if they all listened. He would even tell them sometimes about his own father and mother—how the whole sky full of angels fell down upon them and took them away. But he said most about his sister. For her he mourned more than for any of the rest. Her screams as the black aunt carried her away, would sometimes come back to him with such verisimilitude of nearness, that, forgetting everything about him, he would start to run to her. He felt somehow that it was well with the others, but Maly had always needed *him*, and more than ever in the last days of their companionship. He wept for nobody but Maly. In the night he would wake up suddenly, thinking he heard her crying out for him. Then he would get out of bed, creep to the stable, go to Jonathan, and to him pour out his

low-voiced complaint. Jonathan was the biggest and oldest horse on the farm.

How much he thought they understood of what he told them, I cannot say. He was never silly; and where we cannot be sure, we may yet have reason to hope. He believed they knew when he was in trouble, and sympathized with him, and would gladly have relieved him of his pain. I suspect most animals know something of the significance of tears. More animals shed tears themselves than people think.

For dogs, bless them, they are everywhere, and the boy had known them from time immemorial.

In the village, some of Clare's old admirers began to remark that he no longer "looked the little gentleman." This was caused chiefly by the state of his clothes. They were not fit for the work to which he was put, and within a few weeks were very shabby. Besides, he was growing rapidly, so that he and his garments were in too evident process of parting company. Accustomed to a mother's attentions, he had never thought of his clothes except to take care of them for her sake; now he tried to mend them, but soon found his labour of little use. He had no wages to buy anything with. His clothes or his health or his education were nothing to Mrs. Goodenough. It was no concern of hers whether he looked decent or not. What right had such as he to look decent? It was more than enough that she fed him! The shabbiness of the beggarly creature was a consolation to her.

But Clare's toil in the open air, and his constant and willing association with the animals, had begun to give him a bucolic appearance. He grew a trifle browner, and showed here and there a freckle. His health was splendid.

Nothing seemed to hurt him. Hardship was wholesome to him. To the eyes that hated him, and grudged the hire of the mere food by which he grew, he seemed every day to enlarge visibly. Already he gave promise of becoming a man of more than ordinary strength and vigour. Possibly the animals gave him something.

What may have been his outlook and hope all this time, who shall tell! He never grumbled, never showed sign of pain or unwillingness, gave his mistress no reason for fault-finding. She found it hard even to discover a pretext. She seemed always ready to strike him, but was probably afraid to do so without provocation her husband would count sufficient. Clare never showed discomfort, never even sighed except he were alone. Chequered as his life had been, if ever he looked forward to a fresh change, it was but as a far possibility in the slow current of events. But he was constantly possessed with a large dim sense of something that lay beyond, waiting for him; something toward which the tide of things was with certainty drifting him, but with which he had nothing more to do than wait. He did not see that to do the things given him to do was the only preparation for whatever, in the dim under-world of the future, might be preparing for him; but he did feel that he must do his work. He did not then think much about duty. He was actively inclined, had a strong feeling for doing a thing as it ought to be done; and was thoroughly loyal to any one that seemed to have a right over him. In this blind, enduring, vaguely hopeful way, he went on—sustained, and none the less certainly that he did not know it, from the fountain of his life. When the winter came, his sufferings, cared for as he had been, and accustomed

to warmth and softness, must at times have been considerable. In the day his work was a protection, but at night the house was cold. He had, however, plenty to eat, had no ailment, and was not to be greatly pitied.

CHAPTER XII.

CLARE BECOMES A GUARDIAN OF THE POOR.

SIMPSON, the bully of Clare's childhood, went limping about on a crutch, permanently lame, and full of hatred toward the innocent occasion of the injury he had brought upon himself. Ever since his recovery, he had, loitering about in idleness, watched the boy, to waylay and catch him at unawares. Not until Clare went to the farm, however, did he once succeed; for it was not difficult to escape him, so long as he had not laid actual hold on his prey. But he grew more and more cunning, and contrived at last, by creeping along hedges and lying in ambush like a snake, to get his hands upon him. Then the poor boy fared ill.

He went home bleeding and torn. The righteous churchwarden rebuked him with severity for fighting. His mistress told him she was glad he had met with some one to give him what he deserved, for she could hardly keep her hands off him. He stared at her with wondering eyes, but said nothing. She turned from them: the devil in her could not look in the eyes of the angel in him. The next time he fell into the snare of his enemy, he managed to conceal what had befallen him. After that he was too wide awake to be caught.

There was in the village a child whom nobody heeded. He was far more destitute than Clare, but had too much liberty. He lived with a wretched old woman who called him her grandson: whether he was or not nobody cared. She made her livelihood by letting beds, in a cottage or rather hovel which seemed to be her own, to wayfarers, mostly tramps, with or without trades. The child was thus thrown into the worst of company, and learned many sorts of wickedness. He was already a thief, and of no small proficiency in his art. Though village-bred, he could pick a pocket more sensitive than a clown's. Small and deft, he had never stood before a magistrate. He was a miserable creature, bare-footed and bare-legged; about eight years of age, but so stunted that to the first glance he looked less than six—with keen ferret eyes in red rims, red hair, pasty, freckled complexion, and a generally unhealthy look; from which marks all, Clare conceived a pitiful sympathy for him. Their acquaintance began thus:—

One day, during his father's last illness, he happened to pass the door of the grandmother's hovel while the crone was administering to Tommy a severe punishment with a piece of thick rope: she had been sharp enough to catch him stealing from herself. Clare heard his cries. The door being partly open, he ran in, and gave him such assistance that they managed to bolt together from the hut. A friendship, for long almost a silent one, was thus initiated between them. Tommy—Clare never knew his other name, nor did the boy himself—would off and on watch for a sight of him all day long, but had the instinct, or experience, never to approach him if any one was with him. He was careful not to compromise him.

The instant the most momentary *tête-à-tête* was possible, he would rush up, offer him something he had found or stolen, and hurry away again. That he was a thief Clare had not the remotest suspicion. He had never offered him anything to suggest theft.

By and by it came to the knowledge of Clare's enemy that there was a friendship between them, and the discovery wrought direness for both. One day Simpson saw Clare coming, and Tommy watching him. He laid hold of Tommy, and began cuffing him and pulling his hair, to make him scream, thinking thus to get hold of Clare. But notwithstanding the lesson he had received, the rascal had not yet any adequate notion of the boy's capacity for action where another was concerned. He flew to the rescue, caught up the crutch Simpson had dropped, and laid it across his back with vigour. The fellow let Tommy go and turned on Clare, who went backward, brandishing the crutch.

"Run, Tommy," he cried.

Tommy retreated a few steps.

"Run yourself," he counselled, having reached a safe distance. "Take his third leg with you."

Clare saw the advice was good, and ran. But the next moment reflection showed him the helplessness of his enemy. He turned, and saw him hobbling after him in such evident pain and discomfiture, that he went to meet him, and politely gave him his crutch. He might have thrown it to him and gone on, but he had a horror of rudeness, and handed it to him with a bow. Just as he regained his perpendicular, the crutch descended on his head, and laid him flat on the ground. There the tyrant belaboured him. Tommy stood and regarded the proceeding.

"The cove's older an' bigger an' pluckier than me," he said to himself; "but he's an ass. He'll come to grief unless he's looked after. He'll be hanged else. He don't know how to dodge. I'll have to take him in charge!"

When he saw Clare free, an event to which he had contributed nothing, he turned and ran home.

Simpson redoubled now his persecution of Clare, and persecuted Tommy because of Clare. He lurked for Tommy now, and when he caught him, tormented him with choice tortures. In a word, he made his life miserable. After every such mischance Tommy would hurry to the farm, and lie about in the hope of a sight of Clare, or possibly a chance of speaking to him. His repute was so bad that he dared not show himself.

Hot tears would come into Clare's eyes as he listened to the not always unembellished tale of Tommy's sufferings at the hands of Simpson; but he never thought of revenge, only of protection or escape for the boy. It comforted him to believe that he was growing, and would soon be a match for the oppressor.

Whether at this time he felt any great interest in life, or recognized any personal advantage in growing, I doubt. But he had the friendship of the animals; and it is not surprising that creatures their maker thinks worth making and keeping alive, should yield consolation to one that understands them, or even fill with a mild joy the pauses of labour in an irksome life.

Then each new day was an old friend to the boy. Each time the sun rose, new hope rose with him in his heart. He came every morning fresh from home, with a fresh promise. The boy read the promise in his great

shining, and believed it; gazed and rejoiced, and turned to his work.

But the hour arrived when his mistress could bear his presence no longer. Some petty loss, I imagine, had befallen her. Nothing touched her like the loss of money —the love of which is as dread a passion as the love of drink, and more ruinous to the finer elements of the nature. It was like the tearing out of her heart to Mrs. Goodenough to lose a shilling. Her self-command forsook her, perhaps, in some such moment of vexation; anyhow, she opened the sluices of her hate, and overwhelmed him with it in the presence of her husband.

The farmer knew she was unfair, knew the orphan a good boy and a diligent, knew there was nothing against him but the antipathy of his wife. But, annoyed with her injustice, he was powerless to change her heart. Since the boy came to live with them, he had had no pleasure in his wife's society. She had always been moody and dissatisfied, but since then had been unbearable. Constantly irritated with and by her because of Clare, he had begun to regard him as the destroyer of his peace, and to feel a grudge against him. He sat smouldering with bodiless rage, and said nothing.

Clare too was silent,—for what could he say? Where is the wisdom that can answer hatred? He carried to his friend Jonathan a heart heavy and perplexed.

"Why does she hate me so, Jonathan?" he murmured.

The big horse kissed his head all over, but made him no other answer.

CHAPTER XIII.

CLARE THE VAGABOND.

THE next morning Clare happened to do something not altogether to the farmer's mind. It was a matter of no consequence—only cleaning that side of one of the cow-houses first which was usually cleaned last. He gave him a box on the ear that made him stagger, and then stand bewildered.

"What do you mean by staring that way?" cried the farmer, annoyed with himself and seeking justification in his own eyes. "Am I not to box your ears when I choose?" And with that he gave him another blow.

Then first it dawned on Clare that he was not wanted, that he was no good to anybody. He threw down his scraper, and ran from the cow-house; ran straight from the farm to the lane, and from the lane to the high road. Buffets from the hand of his only friend, and the sudden sense of loneliness they caused, for the moment bereft Clare of purpose. It was as if his legs had run away with him, and he had unconsciously submitted to their abduction.

At the mouth of the lane, where it opened on the high road, he ran against Tommy turning the corner, eager to find him. The eyes of the small human monkey were swollen with weeping; his nose was bleeding, and in size and shape scarce recognizable as a nose. At the sight, the consciousness of his protectorate awoke in Clare, and he stopped, unable to speak, but not unable to listen. Tommy blubbered out a confused, half-inarticulate

something about "granny and the other devil," who between them had all but killed him.

"What can I do?" said Clare, his heart sinking with the sense of having no help in him.

Tommy was ready to answer the question. He had been hatching vengeance all the way. Eagerly came his proposition—that they should, in their turn, lie in ambush for Simpson, and knock his crutch from under him. That done, Clare should belabour him with it, while he ran like the wind and set his grandmother's house on fire.

"She'll be drunk in bed, an' she'll be burned to death!" cried Tommy. "Then we'll mizzle!"

"But it would hurt them both very badly, Tommy!" said Clare, as if unfolding the reality of the thing to a foolish child.

"Well! all right! the worse the better! 'Ain't they hurt *us?*" rejoined Tommy.

"That's how we know it's not nice!" answered Clare. "If they set it a going, we ain't to keep it a going!"

"Then they'll be at it for ever," cried Tommy, "an' I'm sick of it! I'll *kill* granny! I swear I will, if I'm hanged for it! She's said a hundred times she'd pull my legs when I was hanged; but *she* won't be at the hanging!"

"Why shouldn't you run for it first?" said Clare. "Then they wouldn't want to hang you!"

"Then I shouldn't have nobody!" replied Tommy, whimpering.

"I should have thought Nobody was as good as granny!" said Clare.

"A big bilin' better!" answered Tommy bitterly. "I wasn't meanin' granny—nor yet stumpin' Simpson."

"I don't know what you're driving at," said Clare.

Tommy burst into tears.

"Ain't you the only one I got, up or down?" he cried.

Tommy had a little bit of heart—not much, but enough to have a chance of growing. If ever creature had less than that, he was not human. I do not think he could even be an ape.

Some of the people about the parson used to think Clare had no heart, and Mrs. Goodenough was sure of it. He had not a spark of gratitude, she said. But the cause of this opinion was that Clare's affection took the shape of deeds far more than of words. Never were judges of their neighbours more mistaken. The chief difference between Clare's history and that of most others was, that his began at the unusual end. Clare began with loving everybody; and most people take a long time to grow to that. Hence, those whom, from being brought nearest to them, he loved specially, he loved without that outbreak of show which is often found in persons who love but a few, and whose love is defiled with partisanship. He loved quietly and constantly, in a fashion as active as undemonstrative. He was always glad to be near those he specially loved; beyond that, the signs of his love were practical—it came out in ministration, in doing things for them. There are those who, without loving, desire to be loved, because they love themselves; for those that are worth least are most precious to themselves. But Clare never thought of the love of others to him—from no heartlessness, but that he did not think about himself—had never done so, at least, until the moment when he fled from the farm with the new agony in his heart that nobody wanted him, that everybody would be happier without him. Happy is he that does not think of him-

self before the hour when he becomes conscious of the bliss of being loved. For it must be and ought to be a happy moment when one learns that another human creature loves him; and not to be grateful for love is to be deeply selfish. Clare had always loved, but had not thought of any one as loving him, or of himself as being loved by any one.

"Well," rejoined Clare, struggling with his misery, "ain't I going myself?"

"You going!—That's chaff!"

"'Tain't chaff. I'm on my way."

"What! Going to hook it? Oh golly! what a lark! Won't Farmer Goodenough look blue!"

"He'll think himself well rid of me," returned Clare with a sigh. "But there's no time to talk. If you're going, Tommy, come along."

He turned to go.

"Where to?" asked Tommy, following.

"I don't know. Anywhere away," answered Clare, quickening his pace.

In spite of his swollen visage, Tommy's eyes grew wider.

"You 'ain't cribbed nothing?" he said.

"I don't know what you mean."

"You 'ain't stole something?" interpreted Tommy.

Clare stopped, and for the first time on his own part, lifted his hand to strike. It dropped immediately by his side.

"No, you poor Tommy," he said. "I don't steal."

"Thought you didn't! What are you running away for then?"

"Because they don't want me."

"Lord! what will you do?"

"Work."

Tommy held his tongue: he knew a better way than that! If work was the only road to eating, things would go badly with *him!* But he thought he knew a thing or two, and would take his chance! There were degrees of hunger that were not so bad as the thrashings he got, for in his granny's hands the rope might fall where it would; while all cripple Simpson cared for was to make him squeal satisfactorily. But work was worse than all! He would go with Clare, but not to work! Not he!

Clare kept on in silence, never turning his head—out into the untried, unknown, mysterious world, which lay around the one spot he knew as the darkness lies about the flame of the candle. They walked more than a mile before either spoke.

CHAPTER XIV.

THEIR FIRST HELPER.

IT was a lovely spring morning. The sun was about thirty degrees above the horizon, shining with a liquid radiance, as if he had already drawn up and was shining through the dew of the morning, though it lay yet on all the grasses by the roadside, turning them into gem-plants. Every sort of gem sparkled on their feathery or beady tops, and their long slender blades. At the first cottages they passed, the women were beginning their day's work, sweeping clean their floors and door-steps. Clare noted that where were most flowers in the garden, the windows were brightest, and the children cleanest.

"The flowers come where they make things nice for them!" he said to himself. "Where the flowers see dirt, they turn away, and won't come out."

From childhood he had had the notion that the flowers crept up inside the stalks until they found a window to look out at. Where the prospect was not to their mind they crept down, and away by some door in the root to try again. For all the stalks stood like watch-towers, ready for them to go up and peep out.

They came to a pond by a farm-house. Clare had been observing with pity how wretched Tommy's clothes were; but when he looked into the pond he saw that his own shabbiness was worse than Tommy's downright miserableness. Nobody would leave either of them within reach of anything worth stealing! What he wore had been his Sunday suit, and it was not even worth brushing!

"I'm 'orrid 'ungry," said Tommy. "I 'ain't swallered a plug this mornin', 'xcep' a lump o' bread out o' granny's cupboard. That's what I got my weltin' for. It were a whole half-loaf, though—an' none so dry!"

Clare had eaten nothing, and had been up since five o'clock—at work all the time till the farmer struck him: he was quite as hungry as Tommy. What was to be done? Besides a pocket-handkerchief he had but one thing alienable.

The very day she was taken ill, he had been in the store-room with his mother, and she, knowing the pleasure he took in the scent of brown Windsor-soap, had made him a present of a small cake. This he had kept in his pocket ever since, wrapt in a piece of rose-coloured paper, his one cherished possession: hunger deadening

sorrow, the time was come to bid it farewell. His heart ached to part with it, but Tommy and he were so hungry!

They went to the door of the house, and knocked—first Clare very gently, then Tommy with determination. It was opened by a matron who looked at them over the horizon of her chin.

"Please, ma'am," said Clare, "will you give us a piece of bread?—as large a piece, please, as you can spare; and I will give you this piece of brown Windsor-soap."

As he ended his speech, he took a farewell whiff of his favourite detergent.

"Soap!" retorted the dame. "Who wants your soap! Where did you get it? Stole it, I don't doubt! Show it here."

She took it in her hand, and held it to her nose.

"Who gave it you?"

"My mother," answered Clare.

"Where's your mother?"

Clare pointed upward.

"Eh? Oh—hanged! I thought so!"

She threw the soap into the yard, and closed the door. Clare darted after his property, pounced upon it, and restored it lovingly to his pocket.

As they were leaving the yard disconsolate, they saw a cart full of turnips. Tommy turned and made for it.

"Don't, Tommy," cried Clare.

"Why not? I'm hungry," answered Tommy, "an' you see it's no use astin'!"

He flew at the cart, but Clare caught and held him.

"They ain't ours, Tommy," he said.

"Then why don't you take one?" retorted Tommy.

"That's why you shouldn't."

"It's why you should, for then it 'ud be yours."

"To take it wouldn't make it ours, Tommy."

"Wouldn't it, though? I believe when I'd eaten it, it would be mine—rather!"

"No, it wouldn't. Think of having in your stomach what wasn't yours! No, you must pay for it. Perhaps they would take my soap for a turnip. I believe it's worth two turnips."

He spied a man under a shed, ran to him, and made offer of the soap for a turnip apiece.

"I don't want your soap," answered the man, "an' I don't recommend cold turmits of a mornin'. But take one if you like, and clear out. The master's cart-whip 'ill be about your ears the moment he sees you!"

"Ain't you the master, sir?"

"No, I ain't."

"Then the turnips ain't yours?" said Clare, looking at him with hungry, regretful eyes, for he could have eaten a raw potato.

"You're a deal too impudent to be hungry!" said the man, making a blow at him with his open hand, which Clare dodged. "Be off with you, or I'll set the dog on you."

"I'm very sorry," said Clare. "I did not mean to offend you."

"Clear out, I say. Double trot!"

Hungry as the boys were, they must trudge! No bread, no turnip for them! Nothing but trudge, trudge till they dropped!

When they had gone about five miles further, they sat down, as if by common consent, on the roadside; and Tommy, used to crying, began to cry. Clare did not

seek to stop him, for some instinct told him it must be a relief.

By and by a working-man came along the road. Clare hesitated, but Tommy's crying urged him. He rose and stood ready to accost him. As soon as he came up, however, the man stopped of himself. He questioned Clare and listened to his story, then counselled the boys to go back.

"I'm not wanted, sir," said Clare.

"They'd kill *me*," said Tommy.

"God help you, boys!" returned the man. "You may be telling me lies, and you may be telling me the truth!—A liar may be hungry, but somehow I grudge my dinner to a liar!"

As he spoke he untied the knots of a blue handkerchief with white spots, gave them its contents of bread and cheese, wiped his face with it, and put it in his pocket; lifted his bag of tools, and went his way. He had lost his dinner and saved his life!

The dinner, being a man's, went a good way toward satisfying them, though empty corners would not have been far to seek, had there been anything to put in them. As it was, they started again refreshed and hopeful. What had come to them once might reasonably come again!

CHAPTER XV.

THEIR FIRST HOST.

AS the evening drew on, and began to settle down into night, a new care arose in the mind of the elder boy. Where were they to pass the darkness?—

how find shelter for sleep? It was a question that gave Tommy no anxiety. He had been on the tramp often, now with one party, now with another of his granny's lodgers, and had frequently slept in the open air, or under the rudest covert. Tommy had not much imagination to trouble him, and in his present moral condition was possibly better without it; but to inexperienced Clare there was something fearful in having the night come so close to him. Sleep out of doors he had never thought of. To lie down with the stars looking at him, nothing but the blue wind between him and them, was like being naked to the very soul. Doubtless there would be creatures about, to share the night with him, and protect him from its awful bareness; but they would be few for the size of the room, and he might see none of them! It was the sense of emptiness, the lack of present life that dismayed him. He had never seen any creatures to shrink from. He disliked no one of the things that creep or walk or fly. Before long he did come to know and dislike at least one sort; and the sea held creatures that in after years made him shudder; but as yet, not even rats, so terrible to many, were a terror to Clare. It was Nothing that he feared.

My reader may say, "But had no one taught him about God?" Yes, he had heard about God, and about Jesus Christ; had heard a great deal about them. But they always seemed persons a long way off. He knew, or thought he knew, that God was everywhere, but he had never felt his presence a reality. He seemed in no place where Clare's eyes ever fell. He never thought, "God is here." Perhaps the sparrows knew more about God than he did then. When he looked out into the night it

always seemed vacant, therefore horrid, and he took it for as empty as it looked. And if there had been no God there, it would have been reasonable indeed to be afraid; for the most frightful of notions is *Nothing-at-all.*

It grew dark, and they were falling asleep on their walking legs, when they came to a barn-yard. Very glad were they to creep into it, and search for the warmest place. It was a quiet part of the country, and for years nothing had been stolen from anybody, so that the people were not so watchful as in many places.

They went prowling about, but even Tommy with innocent intent, eager only after a little warmth, and as much sleep as they could find, and came at length to an open window, through which they crawled into what, by the smell and the noises, they knew to be a stable. It was very dark, but Clare was at home, and felt his way about; while Tommy, who was afraid of the horses, held close to him. Clare's hand fell upon the hind-quarters of a large well-fed horse. The huge animal was asleep standing, but at the touch of the small hand he gave a low whinny. Tommy shuddered at the sound.

"He's pleased," said Clare, and crept up on his near side into the stall. There he had soon made such friends with him, that he did not hesitate to get in among the hay the horse had for his supper.

"Here, Tommy!" he cried in a whisper; "there's room for us both in the manger."

But Tommy stood shaking. He fancied the darkness full of horses' heads, and would not stir. Clare had to get out again, and search for a place to suit his fancy, which he found in an untenanted loose-box, with remains

of litter. There Tommy coiled himself up, and was soon fast asleep.

Clare returned to the hospitality of the big horse. The great nostrils snuffed him over and over as he lay, and the boy knew the horse made him welcome. He dropped asleep stroking the muzzle of his chamber-fellow, and slept all the night, kept warm by the horse's breath, and the near furnace of his great body.

In the morning the boys found they had slept too long, for they were discovered. But though they were promptly ejected as vagabonds, and not without a few kicks and cuffs, these were not administered without the restraint of some mercy, for their appearance tended to move pity rather than indignation.

CHAPTER XVI.

ON THE TRAMP.

WITH the new day came the fresh necessity for breakfast, and the fresh interest in the discovery of it. But breakfast is a thing not always easiest to find where breakfasts most abound; nor was theirs when found that morning altogether of a sort to be envied, ill as they could afford to despise it. Passing, on their goalless way, a flour-mill, the door of which was half-open, they caught sight of a heap, whether floury dust or dusty flour, it would have been hard to say, that seemed waiting only for them to help themselves from it. Fain to still the craving of birds too early for any worm, they swallowed a considerable portion of it, choking as it was,

nor met with rebuke. There was good food in it, and they might have fared worse.

Another day's tramp was thus inaugurated. How it was to end no one in the world knew less than the trampers.

Before it was over, a considerable change had passed upon Clare; for a new era was begun in his history, and he started to grow more rapidly. Hitherto, while with his father or mother, or with his little sister, making life happy to her; even while at the farm, doing hard work, he had lived with much the same feeling with which he read a story: he was in the story, half dreaming, half acting it. The difference between a thing that passed through his brain from the pages of a book, or arose in it as he lay in bed either awake or asleep, and the thing in which he shared the life and motion of the day, was not much marked in his consciousness. He was a dreamer with open eyes and ready hands, not clearly distinguishing thought and action, fancy and fact. Even the cold and hunger he had felt at the farm had not sufficed to wake him up; he had only had to wait and they were removed. But now that he did not know whence his hunger was to be satisfied, or where shelter was to be had; now also that there was a hunger outside him, and a cold that was not his, which yet he had to supply and to frustrate in the person of Tommy, life began to grow real to him; and, which was far more, he began to grow real to himself, as a power whose part it was to encounter the necessities thus presented. He began to understand that things were required of him. He had met some of these requirements before, and had satisfied them, but without knowing them as requirements. He did it half

awake, not as a thinking and willing source of the motion demanded. He did it all by impulse, hardly by response. Now we are put into bodies, and sent into the world, to wake us up. We might go on dreaming for ages if we were left without bodies that the wind could blow upon, that the rain could wet, and the sun scorch, bodies to feel thirst and cold and hunger and wounds and weariness. The eternal plan was beginning to tell upon Clare. He was in process of being changed from a dreamer to a man. It is a good thing to be a dreamer, but it is a bad thing indeed to be *only* a dreamer. He began to see that everybody in the world had to do something in order to get food; that he had worked for the farmer and his wife, and they had fed him. He had worked willingly and eaten gladly, but had not before put the two together. He saw now that men who would be men must work.

His eyes fell upon a congregation of rooks in a field by the roadside. "Are *they* working?" he thought; "or are they stealing? If it be stealing they are at, it looks like hard work as well. It can't be stealing though; they were made to live, and *how* are they to live if they don't grub? that's their work! Still the corn ain't theirs! Perhaps it's only worms they take! Are the worms theirs? A man should die rather than steal, papa said. But, if they are stealing, the crows don't know it; and if they don't know it, they ain't thieves! Is that it?"

The same instant came the report of a gun. A crowd of rooks rose cawing. One of them dropped and lay.

"He must have been stealing," thought Clare, "for see what comes of it! Would they shoot me if I stole? Better be shot than die of hunger! Yes, but better die of hunger than be a thief!"

He had read stories about thieves and honest boys, and had never seen any difficulty in the matter. Nor had he yet a notion of how difficult it is not to be a thief —that is, to be downright honest. If anybody thinks it easy, either he has not known much of life, or he has never tried to be honest; he has done just like other people. Clare did not know that many a boy whose heart sided with the honest boy in the story, has grown up a dishonourable man—a man ready to benefit himself to the disadvantage of others; that many a man who passes for respectable in this disreputable world, is counted far meaner than a thief in the next, and is going there to be put in prison. But he began to see that it is not enough to mean well; that he must be sharp, and mind what he was about; else, with hunger worrying inside him, he might be a thief before he knew. He was on the way to discover that to think rightly—to be on the side of what is honourable when reading a story, is a very different thing from doing right, and being honourable, when the temptation is upon us. Many a boy when he reads this will say, "Of course it is!" and when the time comes, will be a sneak.

Those crows set Clare thinking; and it was well; for if he had not done as those thinkings taught him, he would have given a very different turn to his history. Meditation and resolve, on the top of honourable habit, brought him to this, that, when he saw what was right, he just did it—did it without hesitation, question, or struggle. Every man must, who would be a free man, who would not be the slave of the universe and of himself.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE BAKER'S CART.

THE sweepings of the mill-floor did not last them long, and by the time they saw rising before them the spires and chimneys of the small county town to which the road had been leading them, they were very hungry indeed—as hungry as they well could be without having begun to grow faint. The moment he saw them, Clare began revolving in his mind once more, as many times on the way, what he was to do to get work: Tommy of course was too small to do anything, and Clare must earn enough for both. He could think of nothing but going into the shops, or knocking at the house-doors, and asking for something to do. So filled was he with his need of work, and with the undefined sense of a claim for work, that he never thought how much against him must be the outward appearance which had so dismayed himself when he saw it in the pond; never thought how unwilling any one would be to employ him, or what a disadvantage was the company of Tommy, who had every mark of a born thief.

I do not know if, on his tramps, Tommy had been in a town before, but to Clare all he saw bore the aspect of perfect novelty, notwithstanding the few city-shapes that floated in faintest shadow, like memories of old dreams, in his brain. He was delighted with the grand look of the place, with its many people and many shops. His hope of work at once became brilliant and convincing.

Noiselessly and suddenly Tommy started from his side,

but so much occupied was he with what he beheld and what he thought, that he neither saw him go nor missed him when gone. He became again aware of him by finding himself pulled toward the entrance of a narrow lane. Tommy pulled so hard that Clare yielded, and went with him into the lane, but stopped immediately. For he saw that Tommy had under his arm a big loaf, and the steam of newly-baked bread was fragrant in his nostrils. Never smoke so gracious greeted those of incense-loving priest. Tommy tugged and tugged, but Clare stood stock-still.

"Where did you get that beautiful loaf, Tommy?" he asked.

"Off on a baker's cart," said Tommy. "Don't be skeered; he never saw me! That was my business, an' I seed to 't."

"Then you stole it, Tommy?"

"Yes," grumbled Tommy, "—if that's the name you put upon it when your trousers is so slack you've got to hold on to them or they'd trip you up!"

"Where's the cart?"

"In the street there."

"Come along."

Clare took the loaf from Tommy, and turned to find the baker's cart. Tommy's face fell, and he was conscious only of bitterness. Why had he yielded to sentiment—not that he knew the word—when he longed like fire to bury his sharp teeth in that heavenly loaf? Love—not to mention a little fear—had urged him to carry it straight to Clare, and this was his reward! He was going to give him up to the baker! There was gratitude for you! He ought to have known better than trust *anybody*, even Clare! Nobody was to be trusted but yourself! It did seem hard to Tommy.

They had scarcely turned the corner when they came upon the cart. The baker was looking the other way, talking to some one, and Clare thought to lay down the loaf and say nothing about it: there was no occasion for the ceremony of apology where offence was unknown. But in the very act the baker turned and saw him. He sprang upon him, and collared him. The baker was not nice to look at.

"I have you!" he cried, and shook him as if he would have shaken his head off.

"It's quite a mistake, sir!" was all Clare could get out, so fierce was the earthquake that rattled the house of his life.

"Mistaken am I? I like that!—Police!"

And with that the baker shook him again.

A policeman was not far off; he heard the man call, and came running.

"Here's a gen'leman as wants the honour o' your acquaintance, Bob!" said the baker.

But Tommy saw that, from his size, he was more likely to get off than Clare if he told the truth.

"Please, policeman," he said, "it wasn't him; it was me as took the loaf."

"You little liar!" shouted the baker. "Didn't I see him with his hand on the loaf?"

"He was a puttin' of it back," said Tommy. "I wish he'd been somewheres else! See what he been an' got by it! If he'd only ha' let me run, there wouldn't ha' been nobody the wiser. I *am* sorry I didn't run. Oh, I *ham* so 'ungry!"

Tommy doubled himself up, with his hands inside the double.

"'Ungry, are you?" roared the baker. "That's what

thieves off a baker's cart ought to be! They ought to be always 'ungry—'ungry to all eternity, they ought! An' that's what's goin' to be done to 'em!"

"Look here!" cried a pale-faced man in the front of the crowd, who seemed a mechanic. "There's a way of tellin' whether the boy's speakin' the truth *now!*"

He caught up the restored loaf, halved it cleverly, and handed each of the boys a part.

"Now, baker, what's to pay?" he said, and drew himself up, for the man was too angry at once to reply.

The boys were tearing at the delicious bread, blind and deaf to all about them.

"P'r'aps you would like to give *me* in charge?" pursued their saviour.

"Sixpence," said the man sullenly.

The mechanic laid sixpence on the cover of the cart.

"I ought to ha' made you weigh and make up," he said. "Where's your scales?"

"Mind your own business."

"I mean to. Here! I want another sixpenny loaf—but I want it weighed this time!"

"I ain't bound to sell bread in the streets. You can go to the shop. Them loaves is for reg'lar customers."

He moved off with his cart, and the crowd began to disperse. The boys stood absorbed, each in what remained of his half-loaf.

When he looked up, Clare saw that they were alone. But he caught sight of their benefactor some way off, and ran after him.

"Oh, sir!" he said, "I was so hungry, I don't know whether I thanked you for the loaf. We'd had nothing to-day but the sweepings of a mill."

"God bless my soul!" said the man. "People say there's a God!" he added.

"I think there must be, sir, for you came by just then!" returned Clare.

"How do you come to be so hard-up, my boy? Somebody's to blame somewheres!"

"There ain't no harm in being hungry, so long as the loaf comes!" rejoined Clare. "When I get work we shall be all right!"

"That's your sort!" said the man. "But if there had been a God, as people say, he would ha' made me fit to gi'e you a job, i'stead o' stan'in' here as you see me, with ne'er a turn o' work to do for myself!"

"I'll work my hardest to pay you back your sixpence," said Clare.

"Nay, nay, lad! Don't you trouble about that. I ha' got two or three more i' my pocket, thank God!"

"You have two Gods, have you, sir?" said Clare; "—one who does things for you, and one who don't?"

"Come, you young shaver! you're too much for me!" said the man laughing.

Tommy, having finished his bread, here thought fit to join them. He came slyly up, looking impudent now he was filled, with his hands where his pockets should have been.

"It was you stole the loaf, you little rascal!" said the workman, seeing thief in every line of the boy.

"Yes," answered Tommy boldly, "an' I don't see no harm. The baker had lots, and he wasn't 'ungry! It was Clare made a mull of it! He's such a duffer you don't know! He acshally took it back to the brute! He deserved what he got! The loaf was mine. It wasn't his! *I* stole it!"

"Oh, ho! it wasn't his! it was yours, was it?—Why do you go about with a chap like this, young gentleman?" said the man, turning to Clare. "I know by your speech you 'ain't been brought up alongside o' sech as him!"

"I had to go away, and he came with me," answered Clare.

"You'd better get rid of him. He'll get you into trouble."

"I can't get rid of him," replied Clare. "But I shall teach him not to take what isn't his. He don't know better now. He's been ill-used all his life."

"You don't seem over well used yourself," said the man.

He saw that Clare's clothes had been made for a boy in good circumstances, though they had been long worn, and were much begrimed. His face, his tone, his speech convinced him that they had been made for *him*, and that he had had a gentle breeding.

"Look you here, young master," he continued; "you have no right to be in company with that boy. He'll bring you to grief as sure as I tell you."

"I shall be able to bear it," answered Clare with a sigh.

"He'll be the loss of your character to you."

"I 'ain't got a character to lose," replied Clare. "I thought I had; but when nobody will believe me, where's my character then?"

"Now you're wrong there," returned the man. "I'm not much, I know; but I believe every word you say, and should be very sorry to find myself mistaken."

"Thank you, sir," said Clare. "May I carry your bag for you?"

If Clare had seen what then passed in Tommy's mind,

at the back of those glistening ferret-eyes of his, he would have been almost reconciled to taking the man's advice, and getting rid of him. Tommy was saying to himself that his pal wasn't such a duffer after all—he was on the lay for the man's tools!

Tommy never reasoned except in the direction of cunning self-help—of fitting means and intermediate ends to the one main object of eating. It is wonderful what a sharpener of the poor wits hunger is!

"I guess I'm the abler-bodied pauper!" answered the man; and picking up the bag he had dropped at his feet while they conversed, he walked away.

There are many more generous persons among the poor than among the rich—a fact that might help some to understand how a rich man should find it hard to enter into the kingdom of heaven. It is hard for everybody, but harder for the rich. Men who strive to make money are unconsciously pulling instead of pushing at the heavy gate of the kingdom.

"Tommy!" said Clare, in a tone new to himself, for a new sense of moral protection had risen in him, "if ever you steal anything again, either I give you a hiding, or you and I part company."

Tommy bored his knuckles into his red eyes, and began to whimper. Again it was hard for Tommy! He had followed Clare, thinking to supply what was lacking to him; to do for him what he was not clever enough to do for himself; in short, to make an advantageous partnership with him, to which he should furnish the faculty of picking up unconsidered trifles. Tommy judged Clare defective in intellect, and quite unpractical. He was of the mind of the multitude. The common-minded man

always calls the man who thinks of righteousness before gain, who seeks to do the will of God and does not seek to make a fortune, unpractical. He *will* not see that the very essence of the practical lies in doing the right thing.

Tommy, in a semi-conscious way, had looked to Clare to supply the strength and the innocent look, while he supplied the head and the lively fingers; and here was Clare knocking the lovely plan to pieces! He did well to be angry! But Clare was the stronger; and Tommy knew that, when Clare was roused, though it was not easy to rouse him, he could and would and did fight—not, indeed, as the little coward said to himself *he* could fight, like a wild cat, but like a blundering hornless old cow defending her calf from a cur.

In the heart of all his selfishness, however, Tommy did a little love Clare; and his love came, not from Tommy, but from the same source as his desire for food, namely, from the God that was in Tommy, the God in whom Tommy lived and had his being with Clare. Whether Tommy's love for Clare would one day lift him up beside Clare, that is, make him an honest boy like Clare, remained to be seen.

Finding his demonstration make no impression, Tommy took his knuckles out of his eye-holes and thrust them into his pocket-holes, turned his back on his friend, and began to whistle—with a lump of self-pity in his throat.

CHAPTER XVIII.

BEATING THE TOWN.

THEY turned their faces again toward the centre of the town, and resumed their walk, taking in more of what they saw than while they had not yet had the second instalment of their daily bread. What a thing is food! It is the divineness of the invention—the need for the food, and the food for the need—that makes those who count their dinner the most important thing in the day, such low creatures: nothing but what is good in itself can be turned into vileness. It is a delight to see a boy with a good honest appetite; a boy that *loves* his dinner is a loathsome creature. Eat heartily, my boy, but be ready to share, even when you are hungry, and have only what you could eat up yourself, else you are no man. Remember that you created neither your hunger nor your food; that both came from one who cares for you and your neighbours as well.

In the strength of the half-loaf he had eaten, the place looked to Clare far more wonderful, and his hopes of earning his bread grew yet more radiant. But he passed one shop after another, and always something prevented him from going in. One after another did not look just the right sort, did not seem to invite him: the next might be better! I dare say but for that half-loaf, he would have made a trial sooner, but I doubt if he would have succeeded sooner. He did not think of going to parson. doctor, or policeman for advice; he went walking and staring, followed by Tommy with his hands in his

pocketless pocket-holes. Clare was not yet practical in device, though perfect in willingness, and thorough in design. Up one street and down another they wandered, seeing plenty of food through windows, and in carts and baskets, but never any coming their way, except in the form of tempting odours that issued from almost every house, and grew in keenness and strength toward one o'clock. Oh those odours!—agonizing angels of invisible yet most material good! Of what joys has not the Father made us capable, when the poorest necessity is linked with such pain! What a tormenting thing—and what a good must be meant to come out of it!—to be hungry, downright, cravingly hungry with the whole microcosm, and not a halfpenny to buy a mouthful of assuagement! —to be assailed with wafts of deliciously undefined promise, not one of which seems likely to be fulfilled!—promise true to men hurrying home to dinner or luncheon, but only rousing greater desire in such as Clare and Tommy. Not one opportunity of appropriation presented itself, else it would have gone ill with Tommy, now that the eyes and ears of his guardian were on the alert. For Clare thought of him now as a little thievish pup, for whose conduct, manners, and education he was responsible.

The agony began at length to abate—ready to revive with augmented strength when the next hour for supplying the human furnace should begin to approach. Few even of those who know what hunger is, understand to what it may grow—how desire becomes longing, longing becomes craving, and craving a wild passion of demand. It must be terrible to be hungry, and not know God!

As the evening came down upon them, worn out, faint

with want, shivering with cold, and as miserable in prospect as at the moment, yet another need presented itself with equally imperative requisition—that of shelter that they might rest. It was even more imperative: they could not eat; they *must* lie down!

Whether it be a rudiment retained from their remote ancestry, I cannot tell, but any kind of suffering will wake in some a masterful impulse to burrow; and as the boys walked about in their misery, white with cold and hunger, Clare's eyes kept turning to every shallowest archway, every breach in wall or hedge that seemed to offer the least chance of covert, while, every now and then, Tommy would bolt from his side to peer into some opening whose depth was not immediately patent to his ferret-gaze. Once, in a lane on the outskirts of the town, he darted into a narrow doorway in the face of a wall, but instantly rushed back in horror: within was a well, where water lay still and dark. Then first Clare had a hint of the peculiar dread Tommy had of water, especially of water dark and unexpected. Possibly he had once been thrown into such water to be got rid of. But Clare at the moment was too weary to take much notice of his dismay.

It was an old town in which they were wandering, and change in the channels of traffic had so turned its natural nourishment aside, that it was in parts withering and crumbling away. Not a few of the houses were, some from poverty, some from utter disuse, yielding fast to decay. But there were other causes for the condition of one, which, almost directly they came out of the lane I have just mentioned, into the end of a wide silent street, drew the roving, questing eyes of Clare and Tommy.

The moon was near the full and shining clear, so that they could perfectly see the state it was in. Most of its windows were broken; its roof was like the back of a very old horse; its chimney-pots were jagged and stumped with fracture; from one of them, by its entangled string, the skeleton of a kite hung half-way down the front. But, notwithstanding such signs of neglect, the red-brick wall and the wrought-iron gate, both seven feet high, that shut the place off from the street, stood in perfect aged strength. The moment they saw it, the house seemed to say to them, "There's nobody here: come in!" but the gate and the wall said, "Begone!"

CHAPTER XIX.

THE BLACKSMITH AND HIS FORGE.

AT the end of the wall was a rough boarded fence, in contact with it, and reaching, some fifty yards or so, to a hovel in which a blacksmith, of unknown antecedents, had taken possession of a forsaken forge, and did what odd jobs came in his way. The boys went along the fence till they came to the forge, where, looking in, they saw the blacksmith working his bellows. To one with the instincts of Clare's birth and breeding, he did not look a desirable acquaintance. Tommy was less fastidious, but he felt that the scowl on the man's brows boded little friendliness. Clare, however, who hardly knew what fear was, did not hesitate to go in, for he was drawn as with a cart-rope by the glow of the fire, and the sparks which, as they gazed, began, like embodied

joys, to fly merrily from the iron. Tommy followed, keeping Clare well between him and the black-browed man, who rained his blows on the rosy iron in his pincers, as if he hated it.

"What do you want, gutter-toads?" he cried, glancing up and seeing them approach. "This ain't a hotel."

"But it's a splendid fire," rejoined Clare, looking into his face with a wan smile, "and we're so cold!"

"What's that to me!" returned the man, who, savage about something, was ready to quarrel with anything. "I didn't make my fire to warm little devils that better had never been born!"

"No, sir," answered Clare; "but I don't think we'd better not have been born. We're both cold, and nobody but Tommy knows how hungry I am; but your fire is so beautiful that, if you would let us stand beside it a minute or two, we wouldn't at all mind."

"Mind, indeed! Mind what, you preaching little humbug?"

"Mind being born, sir."

"Why do you say *sir* to me? Don't you see I'm a working man?"

"Yes, and that's why. I think we ought to say *sir* and *ma'am* to every one that can do something we can't. Tommy and I can't make iron do what we please, and you can, sir! It would be a grand thing for us if we could!"

"Oh, yes, a grand thing, no doubt!—Why?"

"Because then we could get something to eat, and somewhere to lie down."

"Could you? Look at me, now! I can do the work of two men, and can't get work for half a man!"

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THE BLACKSMITH GIVES CLARE AND TOMMY A ROUGH GREETING.

"That's a sad pity!" said Clare. "I wish I had work! Then I would bring you something to eat."

The man did not tell them why he had not work enough—that his drunkenness, and the bad ways to which it had brought him, with the fact that he so often dawdled over the work that was given him, caused people to avoid him.

"Who said I hadn't enough to eat? I ain't come to that yet, young 'un! What made you say that?"

"Because when I had work, I had plenty to eat; and now that I have nothing to do, I have nothing to eat. It's well I haven't work now, though," added Clare with a sigh, "for I'm too tired to do any. Please may I sit on this heap of ashes?"

"Sit where you like, so long 's you keep out o' my way. I 'ain't got nothing to give you but a bar of iron. I'll toast one for you if you would like a bite."

"No, thank you, sir," answered Clare, with a smile. "I'm afraid it wouldn't be digestible. They say toasted cheese ain't. I wish I had a try though!"

"You're a comical shaver, you are!" said the blacksmith. "You'll come to the gallows yet, if you're a good boy! Them Sunday-schools is doin' a heap for the gallows!—That ain't your brother?"

By this time Tommy had begun to feel at home with the blacksmith, from whose face the cloud had lifted a little, so that he looked less dangerous. He had edged nearer to the fire, and now stood in the light of it.

"No," answered Clare, with an odd doubtfulness in his tone. "I ought to say *yes*, perhaps, for all men are my brothers; but I mean I haven't any particular one of my very own."

"That ain't no pity; he'd ha' been no better than you. I've a brother I would choke any minute I got a chance."

While they talked, the blacksmith had put his iron in the fire, and again stood blowing the bellows, when his attention was caught by the gestures of the little red-eyed imp, Tommy, who was making rapid signs to him, touching his forehead with one finger, nodding mysteriously, and pointing at Clare with the thumb of his other hand, held close to his side. He sought to indicate thus that his companion was an innocent, whom nobody must mind. In the blacksmith Tommy saw one of his own sort, and the blacksmith saw neither in Tommy nor in Clare any reason to doubt the hint given him. Not the less was he inclined to draw out the idiot.

"Why do you let him follow you about, if he ain't your brother?" he said. "He ain't nice to look at!"

"I want to make him nice," answered Clare, "and then he'll be nice to look at. You mustn't mind him, please, sir. He's a very little boy, and 'ain't been well brought up. His granny ain't a good woman—at least not very, you know, Tommy!" he added apologetically.

"She's a damned old sinner!" said Tommy stoutly.

The man laughed.

"Ha, ha, my chicken! you know a thing or two!" he said, as he took his iron from the fire, and laid it again on the anvil.

But besides the brother he would so gladly strangle, there was an idiot one whom he had loved a little and teazed so much, that, when he died, his conscience was moved. He felt therefore a little tender toward the idiot before him. He bethought himself also that his job would soon be at a stage where the fewer the witnesses the better,

for he was executing a commission for certain burglars of his acquaintance. He would do no more that night! He had money in his pocket, and he wanted a drink!

"Look here, cubs!" he said; if you 'ain't got nowhere to go to, I don't mind if you sleep here. There ain't no bed but the bed of the forge, nor no blankets but this leather apron: you may have them, for you can't do them no sort of harm. I don't mind neither if you put a shovelful of slack and a little water now and then on the fire; and if you give it a blow or two with the bellows now and then, you won't be stone-dead afore the mornin'!—Don't be too free with the coals, now, and don't set the shed on fire, and take the bread out of my poor innocent mouth. Mind what I tell you, and be good boys."

"Thank you, sir," said Clare. "I thought you would be kind to us! I've one friend, a bull, that's very good to me. So is Jonathan. He's a horse. The bull's name is Nimrod. He wants to gore always, but he's never cross with me."

The blacksmith burst into a roar of laughter at the idiotic speech. Then he covered the fire with coal, threw his apron over Clare's head, and departed, locking the door of the smithy behind him.

The boys looked at each other. Neither spoke. Tommy turned to the bellows, and began to blow.

"Ain't you warm yet?" said Clare, who had seen his mother careful over the coals.

"No, I ain't. I want a blaze."

"Leave the fire alone. The coal is the smith's, and he told us not to waste it."

"He ain't no count!" said Tommy, as heartless as any grown man or woman set on pleasure.

"He has given us a place to be warm and sleep in! It would be a shame to do anything he didn't like. Have you no conscience, Tommy?"

"No," said Tommy, who did not know conscience from copper. The germ of it no doubt lay in the God-part of him, but it lay deep. Tommy—no worse than many a boy born of better parents—was like a hill full of precious stones, that grows nothing but a few little dry shrubs, and shoots out cold sharp rocks every here and there.

"If you have no conscience," answered Clare, "one must serve for both—as far as it will reach! Leave go of that bellows, or I'll make you."

Tommy let the lever go, turned his back, and wandered, in such dudgeon as he was capable of, to the other side of the shed.

"Hello!" he cried, "here's a door!—and it ain't locked, it's only bolted! Let's go and see!"

"You may if you like," answered Clare, "but if you touch anything of the blacksmith's, I'll be down on you."

"All right!" said Tommy, and went out to see if there was anything to be picked up.

Clare got on the stone hearth of the forge, and lay down in the hot ashes, too far gone with hunger to care for the clothes that were almost beyond caring for. He was soon fast asleep; and warmth and sleep would do nearly as much for him as food.

CHAPTER XX.

TOMMY RECONNOITRES.

TOMMY, out in the moonlight, found himself in a waste yard, scattered over with bits of iron, mostly old and rusty. It was not an interesting place, for it was not likely to afford him anything to eat. Yet, with the instinct of the human animal, he went shifting and prying and nosing about everywhere. Presently he heard a curious sound, which he recognized as made by a hen. More stealthily yet he went creeping hither and thither, feeling here and feeling there, in the hope of laying his hand on the fowl asleep. Urged by his natural impulse to forage, he had forgotten Clare's warning. His hand did find her, and had it been his grandmother instead of Clare in the smithy, he would at once have broken the bird's neck before she could cry out; but with the touch of her feathers came the thought of Clare, and by this time he understood that what Clare said, Clare would do.

He had some knowledge of fowls; he had heard too much talk about them at his grandmother's not to know something of their habits; and finding she sat so still, he concluded that under her might be eggs. To his delight it was so. The hen belonged to a house at some distance, and had wandered from it, in obedience to the secretive instinct of animal maternity, strong in some hens, to seek a hidden shelter for her offspring. This she had found in the smith's yard, beneath the mould-board of a plough that had lain there for years. Slipping his

hand under her, Tommy found five eggs. In greedy haste he took them, every one.

I must do him the justice to say that his first impulse was to dart with them to Clare. But before he had taken a step toward him, again he remembered his threat. With the eggs inside him, he could run the risk; he would not mind a few blows—not much; but if he took them to Clare, the unbearable thing was, that he would assuredly give every one of them back to the hen. He was an idiot, and Tommy was there to look after him; but, in looking after Clare, was Tommy to neglect himself? If Clare would not eat the eggs Tommy carried him, as most certainly he would not, the best thing was for Tommy to eat them himself! What a good thing that it was no use to steal for Clare! The steal would be all for himself! Not a step from the spot did Tommy move till he had sucked every one of the five eggs. But he made one mistake: he threw away the shells.

When he had sucked them, he found himself much lighter-hearted, but, alas, nearly as hungry as before! The spirit of research began again to move him: where were eggs, what might there not be beside?

The moon was nearly at the full; the smith's yard was radiantly illuminated. But even the moon could lend little enchantment to a scene where nothing was visible but rusty, broken, deserted, despairful pieces of old iron. Tommy lifted his eyes and looked further.

The enclosure was of small extent, bounded on one side by the garden wall of the house they had just passed, and at the bottom by a broken fence, dividing it from a piece of waste land that probably belonged to the house. As he roamed about, Tommy spied a great heap of old iron

piled up against the wall, and made for it, in the hope of enlarging his horizon. He scrambled to the top, and looked over. His gaze fell right into a big but, full of dark water. Twice that evening he met the same horror! There was a legendary report, though he had not heard it, I fancy, that his mother drowned herself instead of him: she fell in, and he was fished out. Whether this was the origin of his fear or not, so far from getting down by means of the water-but, Tommy dared not cross at that point. With much trembling he got on the top of the wall, turned his back on the but, and ran along like a cat, in search of a place where he could descend into the garden. He went right to the end, round the corner, and half-way along the bottom before he found one. There he came to a doorway that had been solidly walled up on the outside, while the door was left in position on the inside—ready for use when the court of chancery should have decided to whom the house belonged. Its frame was flush with the wall, so that its bolts and lock afforded Tommy foothold enough to descend, and confidence of being able to get up again.

He landed in a moonlit wilderness—such a wilderness as a deserted garden speedily becomes, the wealth in the soil converting it the sooner to a savage chaos. Full of the impulse of discovery, and the hope of presenting himself with importance to Clare as the bringer of good tidings, Tommy forced his way through or crept under the overgrown bushes, until he reached a mossy rather than gravelly walk, where it was more easy to advance. It led him to the house.

Had he been a boy of any imagination, he would have shuddered at the thought of attempting an entrance.

All the windows had outside shutters. Those of the ground floor were closed—except one that swung to and fro, and must have swung in many a wind since the house was abandoned. The moon shone with a dull whitish gleam on the dusty windows of the first and second stories, and on the great dormers that shot out from the slope of the roof, and cast strange shadows upon it. The door to the garden had had a porch of trellis-work, over which jasmine and other creeping plants were trained; but whether anything of the porch was left, no one could have told in that thicket of creepers, interlaced and matted by antagonist forces of wind and growth so that not a hint of door was visible. Clearly there was nobody within.

Tommy sought the window with the open shutter. Through the dirty glass, and the reflection of the moon, he could see nothing. He tried the sash, but could not stir it. He went round the corner to one end of the house, and saw another door. But an enemy stepped between: the moon shone suddenly up from the ground. In a hollow of the pavement had gathered a pool from the drip of the neglected gutters, and out of its hidden depth the staring round looked at him. It was the third time Tommy's nerves had been shaken that night, and he could stand no more. At the awful vision he turned and fled, fell, and rose and fled again. It was not imagination in Tommy; it was an undefined, inexplicable horror, that must have had a cause, but could have no reason. Young as he was he had already more than once looked on the face of death, and had felt no awe; he had listened to the gruesomest of tales, told not altogether without art, and had never moved a hair.

Only one material and two spiritual things had power with him; the one material thing was hunger, the two spiritual things were a feeble love for Clare, and a strong horror of water of any seeming depth. Now a new element was added to this terror by the meddling of the moon in the fiendish mystery—the secret of which must, I think, have been the bottomless depth she gave the water.

He rushed down the garden. With frightful hindrance from the overgrowth, he found the prisoned door by strange perversion become a ladder, gained by it the top of the wall, and sped along as if pursued by an incarnate dread. Horror of horrors! all at once the moon again looked up at him from below: he was within a yard or two of the big water-but! Right up to it he must go, for, close to it, on the other side of the wall, was the heap of iron by which alone he could get down. He tightened every nerve for the effort. He assured himself that the thing would be over in a moment; that the water was quiet, and could not follow him; that presently he would find himself in the smithy by the warm forge-fire. The scaring necessity was, that he must stoop and kneel right over the water-but, in order to send his legs in advance down the wall to the top of the mound. It was a moment of agony. That very moment, with an appalling unearthly cry, something dark, something hideous, something of inconceivable ghastliness, as it seemed to Tommy, sprang right out of the water into the air. He tumbled from the wall among the iron, and there lay.

The stolen eggs were avenged. The hen, feverish and unhappy from the loss of her hope of progeny, had gone

to the but to sip a little water. Tommy, appearing on the wall above her, startled her. She, flying up with a screech, startled Tommy, and became her own unwitting avenger

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CHAPTER XXI.

TOMMY IS FOUND AND FOUND OUT.

WHEN Clare woke from his first sleep, which he did within an hour—for he was too hungry to sleep straight on, and the door, imperfectly closed by Tommy, had come open, and let in a cold wind with the moonlight —he raised himself on his elbow, and peered from his stone shelf into the dreary hut. He could not at once tell where he was, but when he remembered, his first thought was Tommy. He looked about for him. Tommy was nowhere. Then he saw the open door, and remembered he had gone out. Surely it was time he had come back! Stiff and sore, he turned on his longitudinal axis, crept down from the forge, and went out shivering to look for his imp. The moon shone radiant on the rusty iron, and the glamour of her light rendered not a few of its shapes and fragments suggestive of cruel torture. Picking his way among spikes and corners and edges, he walked about the hideous wilderness searching for Tommy, afraid to call for fear of attracting attention. The hen too was walking about, disconsolate, but she took no notice of him, neither did the sight of her give him any hint or rouse in him the least suspicion: how could he suspect one so innocent and troubled for the avenging genius through whom Tommy's white face lay upturned

to the white moon! Her egg-shells lay scattered, each a ghastly point in the moonshine, each a silent witness to the deed that had been done. Tommy scattered and forgot them; the moon gathered and noted them. But they told Clare nothing, either of Tommy's behaviour or of Tommy himself.

He came at last to the heap of metal, and there lay Tommy, caught in its skeleton protrusions. A shiver went through him when he saw the pallid face, and the dark streak of blood across it. He concluded that in trying to get over the wall he had failed and fallen back. He climbed and took him in his arms. Tommy was no weight for Clare, weak with hunger as he was, to carry to the smithy. He laid him on the hearth, near the fire, and began to blow it up. The roaring of the wind in the fire did not wake him. Clare went on blowing. The heat rose and rose, and brought the boy to himself at last, in no comfortable condition. He opened his eyes, scrambled to his feet, and stared wildly around him.

"Where is it?" he cried.

"Where's what?" rejoined Clare, leaving the bellows, and taking a hold of him lest he should fall off.

"The head that flew out of the water-but," answered Tommy with a shddder.

"Have you lost your senses, Tommy?" remonstrated Clare. "I found you lying on a heap of old iron against the wall, with the moon shining on you."

"Yes, yes!—the moon! She jumped out of the water-but, and got a hold of me as I was getting down. I knew she would!"

"I didn't think you were such a fool, Tommy!" said Clare.

"Well, you hadn't the pluck to go yourself! You stopt in!" cried Tommy, putting his hand to his head, but more sorely hurt that an idiot should call him a fool.

"Come and let me see, Tommy," said Clare.

He wanted to find out if he was much hurt; but Tommy thought he wanted to go to the water-but, and screamed.

"Hold your tongue, you little idiot!" cried Clare. "You'll have all the world coming after us! They'll think I'm murdering you!"

Tommy restrained himself, and gradually recovering, told Clare what he had discovered, but not what he had found.

"There's something yellow on your jacket! What is it?" said Clare. "I do believe—yes, it is!—you've been eating an egg! Now I remember! I saw egg-shells, more than two or three, lying in the yard, and the poor hen walking about looking for her eggs! You little rascal! You pig of a boy! I won't thrash you this time, because you've fetched your own thrashing. But—!"

He finished the sentence by shaking his fist in Tommy's face, and looking as black at him as he was able.

"I do believe it was the hen herself that frighted you!" he added. "She served you right, you thief!"

"I didn't know there was any harm," said Tommy, pretending to sob.

"Why didn't you bring me my share, then?"

"'Cos I knowed you'd ha' made me give 'em back to the hen!"

"And you didn't know there was any harm, you lying little brute!"

"No, I didn't."

"Now, look here, Tommy! If you don't mind what I

tell you, you and I part company. One of us two must be master, and I will, or you must tramp. Do you hear me?"

"I can't do without wictuals!" whimpered Tommy. "I didn't come wi' *you* a purpose to be starved to death!"

"I dare say you didn't; but when I starve, you must starve too; and when I eat, you shall have the first mouthful. What did you come with me for?"

"'Acos you was the strongest," answered Tommy, "an' I reckoned you would get things from coves we met!"

"Well, I'm not going to get things from coves we meet, except they give them to me. But have patience, Tommy, and I'll get you all you can eat. You must give me time, you know! I 'ain't got work yet!—Come here. Lie down close to me, and we'll go to sleep."

The urchin obeyed, pillowed his head on Clare's chest, and went fast asleep.

Clare slept too after a while, but the necessities of his relation to Tommy were fast making a man of him.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE SMITH IN A RAGE.

THEY had not slept long, when they were roused by a hideous clamour and rattling at the door, and thunderous blows on the wooden sides of the shed. Clare woke first, and rubbed his eyelids, whose hinges were rusted with sleep. He was utterly perplexed with the uproar and romage. The cabin seemed enveloped in a hurricane of kicks, and the air was in a tumult of howl-

ing and brawling, of threats and curses, whose inarticulateness made them sound bestial. There never came pause long enough for Clare to answer that they were locked in, and that the smith must have the key in his pocket. But when Tommy came to himself, which he generally did the instant he woke, but not so quickly this time because of his fall, he understood at once.

"It's the blacksmith! He's roaring drunk!" he said. "Let's be off, Clare! The devil 'ill be to pay when he gets in! He'll murder us in our beds!"

"We ought to let him into his own house if we can," replied Clare, rising and going to the door. It was well for him that he found no way of opening it, for every instant there came a kick against it that threatened to throw it from lock and hinges at once. He protested his inability, but the madman thought he was refusing to admit him, and went into a tenfold fury, calling the boys hideous names, and swearing he would set the shed on fire if they did not open at once. The boys shouted, but the man had no sense to listen with, and began such a furious battery on the door, with his whole person for a ram, that Tommy made for the rear, and Clare followed —prudent enough, however, in all his haste, to close the back-door behind them.

Tommy was in front, and led the way to the bottom of the yard, and over the fence into the waste ground, hoping to find some point in that quarter where he could mount the wall. He could not face the water-but—with the moon in it, staring out of the immensity of the lower world. He ran and doubled and spied, but could find no foothold. Least of all was ascent possible at the spot where the door stood on the other side; the bricks were

smoother than elsewhere. He turned the corner and ran along a narrow lane, Clare still following, for he thought Tommy knew what he was about; but Tommy could find no encouragement to attempt scaling the wall. They might have fled into the fields that lay around; but the burrowing instinct was strong, and the deserted house drew them. Then Clare, finding Tommy at fault, bethought him that the little rascal had got up by the heap on which he discovered him, and must be afraid to go that way again. He faced about and ran, in his turn become leader. Tommy wheeled also, and followed, but with misgiving. When they reached the farther corner of the bottom wall, they stopped and peeped round before they would turn it: they might run against the blacksmith in chase of them! But the sound of his continued hammering at the door came to them, and they went on. They crossed the fence and ran again, ran faster, for now every step brought them nearer to their danger: the heap of iron lay between them and the smithy, and any moment the smith might burst into the shed, rush through, and be out upon them.

They reached the heap. Clare sprang up; and Tommy, urged on the one side by the fear of the drunken smith, and drawn on the other by the dread of being abandoned by Clare, climbed shuddering after him.

"Mind the water-but, Clare!" he gasped; "an' gi' me a hand up."

Clare had already turned on the top of the wall to help him.

"Now let me go first!" said Tommy, the moment he had his foot on it. "I know how to get down."

He scudded along the wall, glad to have Clare between

him and the but. Clare followed swiftly. He was not so quick on the cat-promenade as Tommy, but he had a good head, and was spurred by the apprehension of being seen up there in the moonlight.

CHAPTER XXIII.

TREASURE TROVE.

IN a few moments they were safe in the thicket at the foot of what had been their enemy and was now their friend—the garden-wall. How many things and persons there are whose other sides are altogether friendly! These are their true selves, and we must be true to get at them.

Tommy again took the lead, though with a fresh sinking of the heart because of that other place with the moon in it. Through the tangled thicket they made or found their way—and there stood the house, with the moon looking down on its roof, and the drunkard's thunder troubling her still pale light—her *moon-thinking.* But for the noise and the haste, Clare would have been frightened at them. There seemed some secret between the house and the moon which they were determined no one else should share. They were of one mind to terrify man or boy who should attempt to cross the threshold! There was no time, however, to heed such fancies. "If we could only get in without spoiling anything!" thought Clare. Once in, they would hurt nothing, take but the shelter and rest lying there of no good to anybody, and

leave them there all the same when they had done with them!

While they stood looking at the house, the thundering at the door of the smithy ceased. Presently they heard voices in altercation. One voice was that of the smith, quieter than when last they heard it, but ill-tempered and growling as at first. The other seemed that of a woman. She had been able so far to quiet him, probably, that he remembered he had the key in his pocket; for they thought they heard the door of the smithy open. Then all was silent, and the outcasts pursued their quest of an entrance to the house.

Clare went ferreting as Tommy had done. He also tried to get a peep through the window with the swinging shutter, but had no better success than Tommy. Then he started to go round the corner next the blacksmith's yard.

"Look out!" cried Tommy in a loud whisper, when he saw where he was going.

"Why?" asked Clare.

"Because there's a horrible hole there, full of water," answered Tommy.

"I'll keep a look out," returned Clare, and went.

When he was about half-way along the end of the house, he heard a noise he did not understand, and stopped to listen. Some one seemed moving somewhere.

Then came a kind of scrambling sound, and presently the noise of a great watery splash. Clare shivered from head to foot.

"Something has fallen into the hole Tommy mentioned!" he said to himself, and ran on to see. A few steps brought him to what Tommy had taken for a great

hole. It was nothing but a pool of rain-water: the splash could not have come from that!

Then it occurred to him that the water-but could not be far off. He forced his way through shrubs of various kinds, and reaching the wall, went back along it until he came to the but. A ray of moonlight showed him that the side of it was wet, as if the water had lately come over the edge. He looked about for some means of getting a peep into the huge thing. It stood on a brick stand, of which it left a narrow edge clear, but on this edge the bulge of the but would not permit him to mount. With the help of a small tree, however, he got on the wall, which was better.

Spying into the but, he could see nothing at first, for a chimney was now between it and the moon. A moment more, however, and he descried something white in the dull iron gleam of the water. It was under the water, but floating near the surface. He lay down on the wall, plunged his arm into the but, laid hold of it, and drew it out. It was a little heavy for the size, for what should it be but a tiny baby, in a flannel night-gown, which, as he drew it out, sent back little noisy streams into the but! It lay perfectly still in his arms, he did not know whether dead or alive, but he thought it could hardly be drowned so soon after the splash. It had been drugged, and the antagonism of the two means employed to kill it was probably the saving of its life.

Clare stood in stony bewilderment. What was he to do? Certainly not to go after the mother! The first thing was to get it down from the wall. That he could easily have done on the other side, by the heap; but that was the side whence it must have been thrown, and

they would be but in worse difficulty there! He must get the baby down inside the wall! With at least one arm occupied, the tree-way was impracticable. There was only one other way, and that full of danger! But where there is only one way, that way must be taken, and Clare did not hesitate. He started along the top of the wall, with the poor unconscious germ of humanity in his arms. He had lifted it from its watery coffin, out of the cold arms of death, up into the clear air of life! True, that air was cold, and filled only with moonshine; but there was the house whose seal might be broken! and the moon saw the sun making warm the under world! Along the narrow way, through the still, keen glimmer, unseen, probably, by any eye in the sleeping town, he bore his burden, speeding as fast as he dared, for he must not set a foot down amiss!

Had any one caught sight of him, what a commotion would not the tale have roused—of the spectre of a boy with a baby in his arms, gliding noiseless in the moon and the middle night, along the top of the high brick wall of a deserted house, where no one had lived within the memory of man!

When he reached the door-ladder, he found descent difficult but possible. It was more difficult to make his way through the tangled bushes without scratching the baby, which, after all, might, alas, be beyond hurt! He held it close to his bosom, life coaxing life to "stay a little."

Thus laden, he appeared before Tommy, who had heard the splash, and thought Clare had fallen into the deep hole, but had not had courage to go and see, partly from the fear of verifying his fear, but more from his horror

of the watery abyss. He stood trembling where Clare had left him.

To save the baby was now Clare's only thought. The baby was now the one thing in the universe! If only the light that shone on it were that of the hot sun instead of the cold moon, which looked far more like killing than bringing to life! "And," thought Clare with himself, "there ain't much more heat in my body than in that shivery moon!" But the sun would wake and mount the sky, and send the moon down, and all would be different! Only, if nothing could be done in the meantime, where would baby be by then!

"Here, Tommy," he cried, "come and see what I found in the water-but."

At the word, Tommy turned to flee; but confidence in Clare, and curiosity to see what, in Clare's arms, could hardly hurt him, prevailed, and he drew near cautiously.

"Lord, it's a kid!" he cried.

"It's not a kid," said Clare, who had no slang; "it's a baby!"

"Well! ain't a baby a kid, just?"

Tommy did not know that the word stood for anything else than a child, which was indeed its meaning long before it was specially applied to the young of the goat. A *kidnapper* or *kidnabber* is a stealer of children. Mr. Skeat tells us that *kid* meant at first just a young one.

"You can't tell me what to do with it, I'm afraid, Tommy!" said Clare.

Already it was as if from all eternity he had loved this helpless little waif of Time, with its small, thin, blue-gray, gin-drugged face; this tiny life, so hopeless, so

miserable, yet so uncomplaining: the thing that was, was the thing for it to bear; it had come into the world to bear it! Ready to die, even Death would not have it; it must live where it was not wanted, where it was not welcome!

"Yes, I can!" answered Tommy with evil promptitude. "Put it in again."

"But that would drown it, you know, Tommy!" answered Clare, treating him like the child he was not. "We want it to live, Tommy!"

His tenderness for the baby made him speak with foolish gentleness.

"No, we don't!" returned Tommy. "What business has *it* to live, when we can't get nothing to eat?"

Clare held faster to the baby with one arm, and with the fist of the other struck straight out at Tommy, hit him between the eyes, and knocked him flat. It was a miserable thing to have to do, and it made Clare miserable, for Tommy was not half his size, and was still suffering from his fall on the iron. But then the dying baby was not half Tommy's size, and any milder argument would have been lost on him: he was thus sent on the way to understand that the baby had rights; and that if the baby could not enforce them, there was one in the world that could and would. Never in his life did Clare show more instinctive wisdom than in that knock-down blow to the hardly blamable little devil!

Tommy got up at once. He was not much hurt, for he had a hard head though he was easily knocked over. From that moment he began to respect Clare. He had loved him before in a way; he had patronized him, and feared to offend him because he was stronger than he;

but until now he had had no respect for him, believing little Tommy a much finer fellow than big Clare. There are thousands for whom a blow is a better thing than expostulation, persuasion, or any sort of kindness. They are such that nothing but a blow will set their door ajar for love to get in. That is why hardships, troubles, disappointments, and all kinds of pain and suffering, are sent to so many of us. We are so full of ourselves, and feel so grand, that we should never come to know what poor creatures we are, never begin to do better, but for the knock-down blows that the loving God gives us. We do not like them, but he does not spare us for that.

CHAPTER XXIV.

JUSTIFIABLE BURGLARY.

TOMMY rose rubbing his forehead, and crying quietly. He did not dare say a word. It was well for him he did not. Clare, perplexed and anxious about the baby, was in no mood to accept annoyance from Tommy. But the urchin remaining silent, the elder boy's indignation began immediately to settle down.

The infant lay motionless, its little heart beating doubtfully, like the ticking of a clock off the level, as if the last beat might be indeed the last.

"We *must* get into the house, Tommy!" said Clare.

"Yes, Clare," answered Tommy, very meekly, and went off like a shot to renew investigation at the other end of the house. He was back in a moment, his face

as radiant with success as such a face could be, with such a craving little body under it.

"Come, come," he cried. "We can get in quite easy. I ha' *been* in!"

The keen-eyed monkey had found a cellar-window, sunk a little below the level of the ground—a long, narrow, horizontal slip, with a grating over its small area not fastened down. He had lifted it, and pushed open the window, which went inward on rusty hinges—so rusty that they would not quite close again. That he had been in was a lie. *He* knew better than go first! He belonged to the school of *No. 1!*—all mean beggars.

Clare hastened after him.

"Gi' me the kid, an' you get in; you can reach up for it better, 'cause ye're taller," said Tommy.

"Is it much of a drop?" asked Clare.

"Nothing much," answered Tommy.

Clare handed him the baby, instructing him how to hold it, and threatening him if he hurt it; then laid himself on his front, shoved his legs across the area through the window, and followed with his body. Holding on to the edge of the window-sill, he let his feet as far down as he could, then dropped, and fell on a heap of coals, whence he tumbled to the floor of the cellar.

"You should have told me of the coals!" he said, rising, and calling up through the darkness.

"I forgot," answered Tommy.

"Give me the baby," said Clare.

When Tommy took the baby, he renewed that moment, and began to cherish the sense of an injury done him by the poor helpless thing. He did not pinch it, only because

he dared not, lest it should cry. When he heard Clare fall on the coals, and then heard him call up from the depth of the cellar, he was greatly tempted to turn with it to the other end of the house, and throw it in the pool, then make for the wall and the fields, leaving Clare to shift for himself. But he durst not go near the pool, and Clare would be sure to get out again and be after him! so he stood with the hated creature in his unprotective arms. When Clare called for it, he got into the shallow area, and pushed the baby through the window, grasping the extreme of its garment, and letting it hang into the darkness of the cellar, head downward. I believe then the baby was sick, for, a moment after, and before Clare could get a hold of it, it began to cry. The sound thrilled him with delight.

"Oh, the darling!—Can't you let her down a bit farther, Tommy?" he said, with suppressed eagerness.

He had climbed on the heap of coals, and was stretching up his arms to receive her. In the faint glimmer from the diffused light of the moon, he could just distinguish the window, blocked up by Tommy; the baby he could not see.

"No, I can't," answered Tommy. "Catch! There!"

So saying he yielded to his spite, and waiting no sign of preparedness on the part of Clare, let go his hold, and dropped the little one. It fell on Clare and knocked him over; but he clasped it to him as he fell, and they hurtled to the bottom of the coals without much damage.

"I have her!" he cried as he got up. "Now you come yourself, Tommy."

He had known no baby but his lost sister, and thought of all babies as girls.

"You'll catch me, won't you, Clare?" said Tommy.

"The thing you've done once you can do again! I can't set down the baby to catch you!" replied the unsuspicious Clare, and turned to seek an exit from the cellar. He had not had time yet to wonder how Tommy had got out.

Tommy came tumbling on the top of the coals: he dared not be left with the water-but and the pool and the moon.

"Where are you, Clare?" he called.

Clare answered him from the top of the stone stair that led to the cellar, and Tommy was soon at his heels. Going along a dark passage, where they had to feel their way, they arrived at the kitchen. The loose outside shutter belonged to it, and as it was open, a little of the moonlight came in. The place looked dreary enough and cold enough with its damp brick-floor and its rusty range; but at least they were out of the air, and out of sight of the moon! If only they had some of that coal alight!

"I don't see as we're much better off!" said Tommy. "I'm as cold as pigs' trotters!"

"Then what must baby be like!" said Clare, whose heart was brimful of anxiety for his charge. It seemed to him he had never known misery till now. Life or death for the baby—and he could do nothing! He was cold enough himself, what with hunger, and the night, and the wet and deadly cold little body in his arms; but whatever discomfort he felt, it seemed not himself but the baby that was feeling it; he imputed it all to the baby, and pitied the baby for the cold he felt himself.

"We needn't stay here, though," he said. "There

must be better places in the house! Let's try and find a bedroom!"

"Come along!" responded Tommy.

They left the kitchen, and went into the next room. It seemed warmer, because it had a wooden floor. There was hardly any light in it, but it felt empty. They went up the stair. When they turned on the landing half-way, they saw the moon shining in. They went into the first room they came to. Such a bedroom!—larger and grander than any at the parsonage!

"Oh baby! baby!" cried Clare, "now you'll live—won't you?"

He seemed to have his own Maly an infant again in his arms. The thought that the place was not his, and that he might get into trouble by being there, never came to him. Use was not theft! The room and its contents were to him as the water and the fire which even pagans counted every man bound to hand to his neighbour. There was the bed! Through all the cold time it had been waiting for them! The counterpane was very dusty; and oh, such moth-eaten blankets! But there were sheets under them, and they were quite clean, though dingy with age! The moths—that is, their legs and wings and dried-up bodies—flew out in clouds when they moved the blankets. Not the less had they discovered Paradise! For the moths, they must have found it an island of plum-cake!

I do not know the history of the house—how it came to be shut up with so much in it. I only know it was itself shut up in chancery, and chancery is full of moths and dust and worms. I believe nobody in the town knew much about it—not even the thieves. It was of course said to

be haunted, which had doubtless done something for its protection. No one knew how long it had stood thus deserted. Nobody thought of entering it, or was aware that there was furniture in it. It was supposed to be somebody's property, and that it was somebody's business to look after it: whether it was looked after or not, nobody inquired. Happily for Clare and the baby and Tommy, that was nobody's business.

With deft hands—for how often had he not seen his baby-sister undressed!—Clare hurried off the infant's one garment, gently rubbed her little body till it was quite dry, if not very clean, and laid her tenderly in the heart of the blankets, among the remains and eggs and grubs of the mothy creatures—they were not wild beasts, or even stinging things—and covered her up, leaving a little opening for her to breathe through. She had not cried since Clare took her; she was too feeble to cry; but, alas, there was no question about feeding her, for he had no food to give her, were she crying ever so much! He threw off his clothes, and got into the mothy blankets beside her. In a few minutes he began to glow, for there was a thick pile of woolly salvation atop of him. He took the naked baby in his arms and held her close to his body, and they grew warmer together.

"Now, Tommy," he said, "you may take off your clothes, and get in on the other side of me."

Tommy did not need a second invitation, and in a moment they were all fast asleep. A few months, even a few days before, it would have been a right painful thing to Clare to lie so near a boy like Tommy, but suffering had taken the edge off nicety and put it on humanity. The temple of the Lord may need cleansing,

but the temple of the Lord it is. Clare had in him that same spirit which made *the* son of man go beyond the healingly needful, and lay his hand—the Sinaitic manuscript says his *hands*—upon the leper, where a word alone would have served for the leprosy: the hands were for the man's heart. Repulsive danger lay in the contact, but the flesh and bones were human, and very cold.

CHAPTER XXV.

A NEW QUEST.

THOUGH as comfortable as one could be who so sorely lacked food, Clare slept lightly. His baby was heavy on his mind, and he woke very early—woke at once to the anxious thought of a boy without food, money, or friends, and with a hungry baby. He woke, however, with a new train of reasoning in his mind. Babies could not work; babies always had their food given them; therefore babies who hadn't food had a right to ask for it; babies couldn't ask for it; therefore those who had the charge of them, and hadn't food to give them, had a right to do the asking for them. He could not beg for himself as long as he was able to ask for work; but for baby it was his duty to beg, because she could not wait: she would not live till he found work. If he got work that very day, he would have to work the whole day before he got the money for it, and baby would be dead by that time! He crept out, so as not to awake the sleepers, and put on his clothes. They were not dry, but they would

dry when the sun rose. He did not at all like leaving his baby with Tommy, but what was he to do? She might as well die of Tommy as of hunger! Perhaps it might be easier!

He thought over the nature of the boy, and what it would be best to say to him. He saw what many genial persons are slow to see, that kindness, in its natural shape, is to certain dispositions a great barrier in the way of learning either love or duty. With multitudes, nothing but undiluted fear or pain or shame can open the door for love to enter.

He searched the house for a medicine-bottle, such as he had seen plenty of at the parsonage, and found two. He chose the smaller, lest size should provoke disinclination. Then he woke Tommy, and said to him,

"Tommy, I'm going out to get baby's breakfast."

"Ain't you going to give *me* any? Is the kid to have *everything?*"

"Tommy!" said Clare, with a steady look in his eyes that frightened him, "your turn will come next. You won't die of want for a day or two yet. I'll see to you as soon as I can. Only, remember, baby comes first! I'm going to leave her with you. You needn't take her up. You're not able to carry her. You would let her fall. But if, when I come home, I find anything has happened to her, *I'll put you in the water-but*—I WILL. And I'll do it when the moon is in it."

Tommy pulled a hideous face, and began to yell. Clare seized him by the throat.

"Make that noise again, you rascal, and I'll choke you. If you're good to baby while I'm away, I won't eat a mouthful till you've had some; if you're not good to her,

you know what will happen! You've got the thing in your own hands!"

"She'll go an' do something I can't help, an' then you'll go for to drown me!"

Again he began to howl, but Clare checked him as before.

"If you wake her up, I'll—" He had no words, and shook him for lack of any. "I see," he resumed, "I shall have to lock you up in the coal-cellar till I come back! Here! come along!"

Tommy was quiet instantly, and fell to pleading. Clare lent a gracious ear, and yielding to Tommy's protestations, left him with his treasure, and set out on his quest.

He got out through the kitchen, the rustiness of the fastenings of its door delaying him a little, and over the wall by the imprisoned door, taking care to lift as little as possible of his person above the coping as he crossed. He dared not go along the wall in the daylight, or get down in the smith's yard; he dropped straight to the ground.

The country was level, and casting his eyes about, he saw, at no great distance, what looked like a farmstead. He knew cows were milked early, but did not know what time it was. Hoping anyhow to reach the place before the milk was put away in the pans, he set out to run straight across the fields. But he soon found he could not run, and had to drop into a walk.

When he got into the yard, he saw a young woman carrying a foaming pail of milk across to the dairy. He ran to her, and addressed her with his usual "Please, ma'am;" but the pail was heavy, and she kept on without answering him. Clare followed her. and looking into the dairy, saw an elderly woman.

"Please, ma'am, could you afford me as much fresh milk as would fill that bottle?" he said, showing it.

"Well, my man," she answered pleasantly, "I think we might venture as far without fear of the workhouse! But what on earth made you bring such a thimble of a bottle as that?"

"I have no money to pay for it, you see, ma'am; and I thought a little bottle would be better to beg with; it wouldn't be so hard on the farmer!"

"Bless the boy! Much good a drop of milk like that will do him!" said the woman, turning to the girl. "Is it for your mother's tea?"

"No, ma'am; it's for a baby—a very little baby, ma'am! —I think it will hold enough," he added, giving an anxious glance at the bottle in his hand, "to keep her alive till I get work."

The woman looked, and her heart was drawn to the boy who stood gazing at her with his whole solemn, pathetic yet strong face—with his wide, clear eyes, his decided nose, large and straight, his rather long, fine mouth, trembling with eager anxiety, and his confident chin. She saw hunger in his grimy cheeks; she saw that his manners were those of a gentleman, and his clothes poor enough for any tramp, though evidently not made for a tramp. She would have concluded him escaped from cruel guardians, for she was a reader of *The Family Herald;* but that would not account for the baby! The baby did not tally!

"How old's the baby?" she asked.

"I don't know, ma'am; she only came to us last night."

"Who brought her?"

She imagined the boy a simpleton, and expected one of such answers as inconvenient questions in natural history receive from nurses.

"I don't know, ma'am. I took her out of the water-but."

The thing grew bewildering.

"Who put her there?"

"I don't know, ma'am."

"Whose baby is she, then?"

"Mine, I think, ma'am."

"God bless the boy!" said the woman impatiently, and stared at him speechless.

Her daughter in the meantime had filled the phial with new milk. She handed it to him. He grasped it eagerly. Tears of joy came in his big hungry eyes.

"Oh, *thank* you, ma'am!" he said. "But, please, would you tell me," he continued, looking from the one to the other, "how much water I must put in the milk to make it good for baby? I know it wants water, but I don't know how much!"

"Oh, about half and half," answered the elder woman. "'Ain't she got no mother?" she resumed.

"I think she must have a mother, but I daresay she's a tramp," answered Clare.

"I don't want to give my good milk to a tramp!" she rejoined.

"*I*'m not a tramp, please, ma'am!—at least I wasn't till the day before yesterday."

The woman looked at him out of motherly eyes, and her heart swelled into her bosom.

"Wouldn't you like some milk yourself?" she said.

"Oh, yes, ma'am!" answered Clare, with a deep sigh.

She filled a big cup from the warm milk in the pail, and held it out to him. He took it as a man on the scaffold might a reprieve from death, half lifted it to his lips, then let his hand sink. It trembled so, as he set the cup down on a shelf beside him, that he spilled a little. He looked ruefully at the drops on the brick floor.

"Please, ma'am, there's Tommy!" he faltered.

His promise to Tommy had sprung upon him like a fiery flying serpent.

"Tommy! I thought you said the baby was a girl?"

"Yes, the baby's a girl; but there's Tommy as well! He's another of us."

"Your brother, of course!"

"No, ma'am; I'm afraid he's a tramp. But there he is, you see, and I must share with him!"

It grew more and more inexplicable!

A gruff, loud voice came from the yard. It was the farmer's. He was a bitter-tempered man, and his dislike of tramps was almost hatred. His wife and daughter knew that if he saw the boy he would be worse than rude to him.

"There's the master!" cried the mother. "Drink, and make haste out of his way."

"If it's stealing,—" said Clare.

"Stealing! It's no stealing! The dairy's mine! I can give my milk where I please!"

"Well, ma'am, if the milk's mine because you gave it me, it's not begging to ask you to give me a piece of bread for it! I could take a share of that to Tommy!"

"Run, Chris," cried the mother, hurriedly; "take the innocent with you—round outside the yard. Give him a hunch of bread, and let him go. For God's sake don't

let your father see him! Run, my boy, run! There's no time to drink the milk now!"

She poured it back into the pail, and set the cup out of the way.

There was a little passage and another door, by which they left as the farmer entered. The kick he would have given Clare with his heavy boot would, in its consequences, have reached the baby too. The girl ran with him to the back of the house.

"Wait a moment at that window," she said.

Now whether it was loving-kindness all, or that she dared not take the time to divide it, I cannot tell, but she handed Clare a whole loaf, and that a good big one, of home-made bread, and disappeared before he could thank her, telling him to run for his life.

He was able now. With the farmer behind, and the hungry ones before him, he *must* run; and with the phial in his pocket and the loaf in his hands, he *could* run. Happily the farmer did not catch sight of him. His wife took care he should not. I believe, indeed, she got up a brand-new quarrel with him on the spur of the moment, that he might not have a chance.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A NEW ENTRANCE.

CLARE sped jubilant. But soon came a check to his jubilation: it was one thing to drop from the wall, and quite another to climb to the top of it without the help of the door! The same moment he heard the clink

of the smith's hammer on his anvil, and to go by his yard in daylight would be to risk too much! For what would become of them if their retreat was discovered! He stood at the foot of the brick precipice, and stared up with helpless eyes and failing strength. Baby was inside, hungry, and with no better nurse than ill conditioned Tommy; her milk was in his pocket, Tommy's bread in his hand, the insurmountable wall between him and them! He had the daylight now, however, and there was hardly any one about: perhaps he could find another entrance! Round the outside of the wall, therefore, like the Midianite in the rather comical hymn, did Clare prowl and prowl. But the wall rose straight and much too smooth wherever he looked. Searching its face he went all along the bottom of the garden, and then up the narrow lane between it and the garden of the next house, with increasing fear that there was no way but by the smith's yard, and no choice but risk it.

A dozen yards or so, however, from the end of the lane, where it took a sharp turn before entering the street, he spied an opening in the wall—the same from which, the night before, Tommy had returned with such a frightened face. Clare went through, and found a narrow passage running to the left for a short distance between two walls. At the end, half on one side, half on the other of the second wall, lay the well that had terrified Tommy. The wall crossed it with a low arch. On the further side of the well was a third wall, with a space of about two feet and a half between it and the side of the round well. Through that wall there might be a door!—or, if not, there might be some way of getting over it! To cross the well would be awkward, but he must do it!

He tied the loaf in his pocket-handkerchief—he was far past fastidiousness, and Tommy knew neither the word nor the thing—and knotted the ends of it round his neck. But his chief anxiety was not to break the bottle in his jacket-pocket. He got on his knees on the parapet. How deep and dark the water looked! For a moment he felt a fear of it something like Tommy's. How was he to cross the awful gulf? It was not like a free jump; he was hemmed in before and behind, and overhead also. But the baby drew him over the well, as the name of Beatrice drew Dante through the fire. The baby was waiting for him, and it had to be done! He made a cat-leap through beneath the arch, reaching out with his hands and catching at the parapet beyond. He did catch it, just enough of it to hold on by, so that his body did not follow his legs into the water. Oh, how cold they found it after his run! He held on, strained and heaved up, made a great reach across the width of the parapet with one hand, laid hold of its outer edge, made good his grasp on it, and drew himself out of the water, and out of the well.

He was in a narrow space, closed in with walls much higher than his head, out of which he saw no way but that by which he had come in—across the fearful well, that seemed, so dark was its water, to go down and down for ever.

He felt in his pocket. If then he had found baby's bottle broken, I doubt if Clare would ever have got out of the place, except by the door into the next world. What little strength he had was nearly gone, and I think it would then have gone quite. But the bottle was safe, and his courage came back.

He examined his position, and presently saw that the narrowness of his threatened prison would make it no prison at all. He found that, by leaning his back against one wall, pushing his feet against the opposite wall, and making of the third wall a rack for his shoulder, he could worm himself slowly up. It was a task for a strong man, and Clare, though strong for his years, was not at that moment strong. But there was the baby waiting, and here was her milk! He fell to, and, with an agony of exertion, wriggled himself at last to the top—so exhausted that he all but fell over on the other side. He pulled himself together, and dropped at once into the garden. Happier boy than Clare was not in all England then. Hunger, wet, incipient nakedness, for he had torn his clothes badly, were nowhere. Baby was within his reach, and the milk within baby's!

He ran, dripping like a spaniel, to find her, and shot up the stair to the room that held his treasure. To his joy he found both Tommy and the baby fast asleep, Tommy tired out with the weary tramping of the day before, and the baby still under the influence of the opiate her mother had given her to make her drown quietly.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE BABY HAS HER BREAKFAST.

HE waked Tommy, and showed him the loaf. Tommy sprang from his lair and snatched at it.

"No, Tommy," said Clare, drawing back, "I can't trust

you! You would eat it all; and if I died of hunger, what would become of baby, left alone with you? I don't feel at all sure you wouldn't eat *her!*"

Baby started a feeble whimper.

"You must wait now till I've attended to her," continued Clare. "If you had got up quietly without waking her, I would have given you your share at once."

As he spoke, he pulled a blanket off the bed to wrap her in, and made haste to take her up. A series of difficulties followed, which I will leave to the imagination of mothers and aunts, and nurses in general—the worst being that there was no warm water to wash her in, and cold water would be worse than dangerous after what she had gone through with it the night before. Clare comforted himself that washing was a thing non-essential to existence, however desirable for well-being.

Then came a more serious difficulty: the milk must be mixed with water, and water as cold as Clare's legs would kill the drug-dazed shred of humanity! What was to be done? It would be equally dangerous to give her the strong milk of a cow undiluted. There was but one way: he must feed her as do the pigeons. First, however, he must have water! The well was almost inaccessible: to get to it and return would fearfully waste life-precious time! The rain-water in the little pool must serve the necessity! It was preferable to that in the but!

Until many years after, it did not occur to Clare as strange that there should be even a drop of water in that water-but. Whence was it fed? There was no roof near, from which the rain might run into it. If there had ever been a pipe to supply it, surely, in a house so long forsaken, its continuity must have given way

One always sees such barrels empty, dry, and cracked: this one was apparently known to be full of water, for what woman in her senses, however inferior those senses, would throw her child into an empty but! How did it happen to be full? Clare was almost driven to the conclusion that it had been filled for the evil purpose to which it was that night put. Against this was the fact that it would not have been easy to fill such a huge vessel by hand. I suggested that the blacksmith and his predecessors might have used it for the purposes of the forge, and kept it and its feeder in repair. Mr. Skymer endeavoured repeatedly to find out what had become of the blacksmith, but never with any approach to success; the probability being that he had left the world long before his natural time, by disease engendered or quarrel occasioned through his drunkenness.

Clare laid the baby down, and fetched water from the pool. Then he mixed the milk with what seemed the right quantity, again took the baby up, who had been whimpering a little now and then all the time, laid a blanket, several times folded, on his wet knees, and laid her in her blanket upon it. These preparations made, he took a small mouthful of the milk and water, and held it until it grew warm. It was the only way, I condescend to remind any such reader as may think it proper to be disgusted. When then he put his mouth to the baby's, careful not to let too much go at once, they managed so between them that she successfully appropriated the mouthful. It was followed by a second, a third, and more, until, to Clare's delight, the child seemed satisfied, leaving some of the precious fluid for another meal. He put her in the bed again, and covered her up

warm. All the time, Tommy had been watching the loaf with the eyes of a wild beast.

"Now, Tommy," said Clare, "how much of this loaf do you think you ought to have?"

"Half, of course!" answered Tommy boldly, with perfect conviction of his fairness, and pride in the same.

"Are you as big as I am?"

Tommy held his peace.

"You ain't half as big!" said Clare.

"I'm a bloomin' lot hungrier!" growled Tommy.

"You had eggs last night, and I had none!"

"That wurn't my fault!"

"What did you do to get this bread?"

"I staid at home with baby."

"That's true," answered Clare. "But," he went on, "suppose a horse and a pony had got to divide their food between them, would the pony have a right to half? Wouldn't the horse, being bigger, want more to keep him alive than the pony?"

"Don't know," said Tommy.

"But you shall have the half," continued Clare; "only I hope, after this, when you get anything given to you, you'll divide it with me. I try to be fair, and I want you to be fair."

Tommy made no reply. He did not trouble himself about fair play; he wanted all he could get—like most people; though, thank God, I know a few far more anxious to give than to receive fair play. Such men, be they noblemen or tradesmen, I worship.

Clare carefully divided the loaf, and after due deliberation, handed Tommy that which seemed the bigger half. Without a word of acknowledgment, Tommy fell upon it

like a terrier. He would love Clare in a little while when he had something more to give—but stomach before heart with Tommy! His sort is well represented in every rank. There are not many who can at the same time both love and be hungry.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

TREACHERY.

"NOW, Tommy," said Clare, having eaten his half loaf, "I'm going out to look for work, and you must take care of baby. You're not to feed her—you would only choke her, and waste the good milk."

"I want to go out too," said Tommy.

"To see what you can pick up, I suppose?"

"That's my business."

"I fancy it mine while you are with me. If you don't take care of baby and be good to her, I'll put you in the water-but I took her out of—as sure as you ain't in it now!"

"That you shan't!" cried Tommy; "I'll bite first!"

"I'll tie your hands and feet, and put a stick in your mouth," said Clare. "So you'd better mind."

"I want to go with you!" whimpered Tommy.

"You can't. You're to stop and look after baby. I won't be away longer than I can help; you may be sure of that."

With repeated injunctions to him not to leave the room, Clare went.

Before going quite, however, he must arrange for

returning. To swarm up between the two walls as he had done before, would be to bid good-bye to his jacket at least, and he knew how appearances were already against him. Spying about for whatever might serve his purpose, he caught sight of an old garden-roller, and was making for it, when Tommy, never doubting he was gone, came whistling round the corner of the house with his hands in his pocket-holes, and an impudent air of independence. Clare away, he was a lord in his own eyes! He could kill the baby when he pleased! Plainly his mood was, "He thinks I'm going to do as he tells me! Not if I knows it!" Clare saw him before he saw Clare, and rushed at him with a roar.

"You thought I was gone!" he cried. "I told you not to leave the room! Come along to the water-but!"

Tommy shivered when he heard him, and gave a shriek when he saw him coming. He shook till his teeth chattered. But terror not always paralyzes instinct in the wild animal. As Clare came running, he took one step toward him, and dropped on the ground at his feet. Clare shot away over his head, struck his own against a tree, and lay for a minute stunned. Tommy's success was greater than he had hoped. He scudded into the house, and closed and bolted the door to the kitchen.

When Clare came to himself, he found he had a cut on his head. It would never do to go asking for work with a bloody face! The little pool served at once for basin and mirror, and while he washed he thought.

He had no inclination to punish Tommy for the trick he had played him; he had but done after his kind! It would serve a good end too: Tommy would imagine him lurking about to have his revenge, and would not venture

his nose out. He discovered afterward that the little wretch had made fast the cellar-door, so that, if he had entered that way, he would have been caught in a trap, and unable to go or return.

He got the iron roller to the foot of the wall, where he had come over the night before, and where now first he perceived there had once been a door; managed, with its broken handle for a lever, to set it up on end, filled it with earth, and heaped a mound of earth about it to steady it, placed a few broken tiles and sherds of chimney-pots upon it, and from this rickety perch found he could reach the top easily.

The next thing was to arrange for getting up from the other side. For this he threw over earth and stones and whatever rubbish came to his hand, the sole quality required in his material being, that it should serve to lift him any fraction of an inch higher. The space was so narrow that his mound did not require to be sustained by the width of its base except in one direction; everywhere else the walls kept in the heap, and he made good speed. At length he descended by it, sure of being able to get up again.

He had been gone an hour before Tommy dared again leave the room where the baby was. He had planned what to do if Clare got into it: he would threaten, if he came a step nearer, to kill the baby! But if he had him in the coal-cellar, he would make his own conditions! A tramp would not keep a promise, but Clare would! and until he promised not to touch him, he should not come out—not if he died of hunger!

At length he could bear imprisonment no longer. He opened the room-door with the caution of one who thought

a tiger might be lying against it. He saw no one, and crept out with half steps. By slow degrees, interrupted by many an inroad of terror and many a swift retreat, he got down the stair and out into the garden; whence, after closest search, he was at length satisfied his enemy had departed. For a time he was his own master! To one like Tommy—and such are not rare—it is a fine thing to be his own master. But the same person who is the master is the servant—and what a master to serve! Tommy, however, was quite satisfied with both master and servant, for both were himself. What was he to do? Go after something to eat, of course! He would be back long before Clare! He had gone to look for work—and who would give *him* work? If Tommy were as big as Clare, lots of people would give him work! But catch him working! Not if he knew it!—not Tommy!

Never till she was grown up, never, indeed, until she was a middle-aged woman and Mr. Skymer's housekeeper, did the baby know in what danger she was that morning, alone with surnameless Tommy.

His first sense of relation to any creature too weak to protect itself, was the consciousness of power to torment that creature. But in this case the exercise of the power brought him into another relation, one with the waterbut! He went back to the room where the child lay in her blankets like a human chrysalis, and stood for a moment regarding her with a hatred far from mild: was he actually expected to give time and personal notice to that contemptible thing lying there unable to move? *He* wasn't a girl or an old woman! He must go and get something to eat! that was what a man was for! Better twist her neck at once and go!

But he could not forget the water-but—proximate mother of the child. Its idea came sliding into Tommy's range, grew and grew upon Tommy, came nearer and nearer, until the baby was nowhere, and nothing in the world but the water-but. His consciousness was possessed with it. It was preparing to swallow him in its loathsome deep! All at once it jumped back from him, and stood motionless by the side of the wall. Now was his chance! Now he must mizzle! Not a moment longer would he stop in the same place with the horrible thing!

But the baby! Clare would bring him back and put him in the but! No, he wouldn't! What harm would come to the brat? She was not able to roll herself off the bed! She could do nothing but go to sleep again! Out he must and would go! He wanted something to eat! He would be in again long before Clare could get back!

He left the room and the house, ran down the garden, scrambled up the door, got on the top of the wall, and dropped into the waste land behind it—nor once thought that the only way back was by the very jaws of the water-but.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE BAKER.

CLARE went over the wall and the well without a notion of what he was going to do, except look for work. He had eaten half a loaf, and now drew in his cap some water from the well and drank. He felt better

than any moment since leaving the farm. He was full of hope.

All his life he had never been other than hopeful. To the human being hope is as natural as hunger; yet how few there are that hope as they hunger! Men are so proud of being small, that one wonders to what pitch their conceit will have arrived by the time they are nothing at all. They are proud that they love but a little, believe less, and hope for nothing. Every fool prides himself on not being such a fool as believe what would make a man of him. For dread of being taken in, he takes himself in ridiculously. The man who keeps on trying to do his duty, finds a brighter and brighter gleam issue, as he walks, from the lantern of his hope.

Clare was just breaking into a song he had heard his mother sing to his sister, when he was checked by the sight of a long skinny mongrel like a hairy worm, that lay cowering and shivering beside a heap of ashes put down for the dust-cart—such a dry hopeless heap that the famished little dog did not care to search it: some little warmth in it, I presume, had kept him near it. Clare's own indigence made him the more sorry for the indigent, and he felt very sorry for this member of the family; but he had neither work nor alms to give him, therefore strode on. The dog looked wistfully after him, as if recognizing one of his own sort, one that would help him if he could, but did not follow him.

A hundred yards further, Clare came to a baker's shop. It was the first he felt inclined to enter, and he went in. He did not know it was the shop from whose cart Tommy had pilfered. A thin-faced, bilious-looking, elderly man stood behind the counter.

"Well, boy, what do you want?" he said in a low, sad, severe, but not unkindly voice.

"Please, sir," answered Clare, "I want something to do, and I thought perhaps you could help me."

"What can you do?"

"Not much, but I can *try* to do anything."

"Have you ever learned to do anything?"

"I've been working on a farm for the last six months. Before that I went to school."

"Why didn't you go on going to school?"

"Because my father and mother died."

"What was your father?"

"A parson."

"Why did you leave the farm?"

"Because they didn't want me. The mistress didn't like me."

"I dare say she had her reasons!"

"I don't know, sir; she didn't seem to like anything I did. My mother used to say, 'Well done, Clare!' my mistress never said 'Well done!'"

"So the farmer sent you away?"

"No, sir; but he boxed my ears for something—I don't now remember what."

"I dare say you deserved it!"

"Perhaps I did; I don't know; he never did it before."

"If you deserved it, you had no right to run away for that."

The baker taught in a Sunday-school, and was a good teacher, able to make a class mind him.

"I didn't run away for that, sir; I ran away because he was tired of me. I couldn't stay to make him uncomfortable! He had been very kind to me; I fancy it was

mistress made him change. I've been thinking a good deal about it, and that's how it looks to me. I'm very sorry not to have him or the creatures any more."

"What creatures?"

"The bull, and the horses, and the cows, and the pigs —all the creatures about the farm. They were my friends. I shall see them all again somewhere!"

He gave a great sigh.

"What do you mean by that?" asked the baker.

"I hardly know what I mean," answered Clare. "When I'm loving anybody I always feel I shall see that person again some time, I don't know when—somewhere, I don't know where."

"That don't apply to the lower animals; it's nothing but a foolish imagination," said the baker.

"But if I love them!" suggested Clare.

"Love a bull, or a horse, or a pig! You *can't!*" asserted the baker.

"But I *do,*" rejoined Clare. "I love my father and mother much more than when they were alive!"

"What has that to do with it?" returned the baker.

"That I know I love my father and mother, and I know I love that fierce bull that would always do what I told him, and that dear old horse that was almost past work, and was always ready to do his best.—I'm afraid they've killed him by now!" he added, with another sigh.

"But beasts 'ain't got souls, and you can't love them. And if you could, that's no reason why you should see them again."

"I *do* love them, and perhaps they have souls!" rejoined Clare.

"You mustn't believe that! It's quite shocking. It's nowhere in the Bible."

"Is everything that is not in the Bible shocking, sir?"

"Well, I won't say that; but you're not to believe it."

"I suppose you don't like animals, sir! Are you afraid of their going to the same place as you when they die?"

"I wouldn't have a boy about me that held such an unscriptural notion! The Bible says—the spirit of a man that goeth upward, and the spirit of a beast that goeth downward!"

"Is that in the Bible, sir?"

"It is," answered the baker with satisfaction, thinking he had proved his point.

"I'm so glad!" returned Clare. "I didn't know there was anything about it in the Bible! Then when I die I shall only have to go down somewhere, and look for them till I find them!"

The baker was silenced for a moment.

"It's flat atheism!" he cried. "Get out of my shop! What is the world coming to!"

Clare turned and went out.

But though a bilious, the baker was not an unreasonable or unjust man except when what he had been used to believe all his life was contradicted. Clare had not yet shut the door when he repented. He was a good man, though not quite in the secret of the universe. He vaulted over the counter, and opened the door with such a ringing of its appended bell as made heavy-hearted Clare turn before he heard his voice. The long spare white figure appeared on the threshold, framed in the doorway.

"Hi!" it shouted

Clare went meekly back.

"I've just remembered hearing—but mind I *know* nothing, and pledge myself to nothing——"

He paused.

"I didn't say I was *sure* about it," returned Clare, thinking he referred to the fate of the animals, "but I fear I'm to blame for not being sure."

"Come, come!" said the baker, with a twist of his mouth that expressed disgust, "hold your tongue, and listen to me.—I did hear, as I was saying, that Mr. Maidstone, down the town, had one of his errand-boys laid up with scarlet fever. I'll take you to him, if you like. Perhaps he'll have you,—though I can't say you look respectable!"

"I 'ain't had much chance since I left home, sir. I had a bit of soap, but——"

He bethought him that he had better say nothing about his family. Tommy had picked his pocket of the soap the night before, and tried to eat it, and Clare had hidden it away: he wanted it to wash the baby with as soon as he could get some warm water; but when he went to find it to wash his own face, it was gone. He suspected Tommy, but before long he had terrible ground for a different surmise.

"You see, sir," he resumed, "I had other things to think of. When your tummy's empty, you don't think about the rest of you—do you, sir?"

The baker could not remember having ever been more than decently, healthily hungry in his life; and here he had been rough on a well-bred boy too hungry to wash his face! Perhaps the word *one of these little ones* came to him. He had some regard for him who spoke it,

though he did talk more about him on Sundays than obey him in the days between.

"I don't know, my boy," he answered. "Would you like a piece of bread?"

"I'm not much in want of it at this moment," replied Clare, "but I should be greatly obliged if you would let me call for it by and by. You see, sir, when a man has no work, he can't help having no money!"

"A man!" thought the baker. "God pity you, poor monkey!"

He called to some one to mind the shop, removed his apron and put on a coat, shut the door, and went down the street with Clare.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE DRAPER.

AT the shop of a draper and haberdasher, where one might buy almost anything sold, Clare's new friend stopped and walked in. He asked to see Mr. Maidstone, and a shopman went to fetch him from behind. He came out into the public floor.

"I heard you were in want of a boy, sir," said the baker, who carried himself as in the presence of a superior; and certainly fine clothes and a gold chain and ring did what they could to make the draper superior to the baker.

"Hm!" said Mr. Maidstone, looking with contempt at Clare.

"I rather liked the look of this poor boy, and ventured

to bring him on approval," continued the baker timidly. "He ain't much to look at, I confess!"

"Hm!" said the draper again. "He don't look promising!"

"He don't. But I think he means performing," said the baker, with a wan smile.

"Donnow, I'm sure! If he 'appened to wash his face, I could tell better!"

Clare thought he had washed it pretty well that morning because of his cut, though he had, to be sure, done it without soap, and had been at rather dirty work since!

"He says he's been too hungry to wash his face," answered the baker.

"Didn't 'ave his 'ot water in time, I suppose!—Will you answer for him, Mr. Ball?"

"I can't, Mr. Maidstone—not one way or another. I simply was taken with him. I know nothing about him."

Here one of the shopmen came up to his master, and said,

"I heard Mr. Ball's own man yesterday accuse this very boy of taking a loaf from his cart."

"Yesterday!" thought Clare; "it seems a week ago!"

"Oh! this is the boy, is it?" said the baker. "You see I didn't know him! All the same, I don't believe he took the loaf."

"Indeed I didn't, sir! Another boy took it who didn't know better, and I took it from him, and was putting it back on the cart when the man turned round and saw me, and wouldn't listen to a word I said. But a workingman believed me, and bought the loaf, and gave it between us."

"A likely story!" said the draper.

"I've heard that much," said the baker, "and I believe it. At least I have no reason to believe my man against him, Mr. Maidstone. That same night I discovered he had been cheating me to a merry tune. I discharged him this morning."

"Well, he certainly don't look a respectable boy," said the draper, who naturally, being all surface himself, could read no deeper than clothes; "but I'm greatly in want of one to carry out parcels, and I don't mind if I try him. If he do steal anything, he'll be caught within the hour!"

"Oh, thank you, sir!" said Clare.

"You shall have sixpence a day," Mr. Maidstone continued, "—not a penny more till I'm sure you're an honest boy."

"Thank you, sir," iterated Clare. "Please may I run home first? I won't be long. I 'ain't got any other clothes, but——"

"Hold your long tongue. Don't let me hear it wagging in my establishment. Go and wash your face and hands."

Clare turned to the baker.

"Please, sir," he said softly, "may I go back with you and get the piece of bread?"

"What! begging already!" cried Mr. Maidstone.

"No, no, sir," interposed the baker. "I promised him a piece of bread. He did not ask for it."

The good man was pleased at his success, and began to regard Clare with the favour that springs in the heart of him who has done a good turn to another through a third. Had he helped him out of his own pocket, he might not have been so much pleased. But there had

been no loss, and there was no risk! He had beside shown his influence with a superior!

"I am so much obliged to you, sir!" said Clare as they went away together. "I cannot tell you how much!"

He was tempted to open his heart and reveal the fact that three people would live on the sixpence a day which the baker's kindness had procured him, but prudence was fast coming frontward, and he saw that no one must know that they were in that house! If it were known, they would probably be turned out at once, which would go far to be fatal to them as a family. For, if he had to pay for lodgings, were it no more than the tramps paid Tommy's grandmother, sixpence a day would not suffice for bare shelter. So he held his tongue.

"Thank me by minding Mr. Maidstone's interests," returned his benefactor. "If you don't do well by him, the blame will come upon me."

"I will be very careful, sir," answered Clare, who was too full of honesty to think of being honest; he thought only of minding orders.

They reached the shop; the baker gave him a small loaf, and he hurried home with it. The joy in his heart, spread over the days since he left the farm, would have given each a fair amount of gladness.

Taking heed that no one saw him, he darted through the passage to the well, got across it better this time, rushed over the wall like a cat, fell on the other side from the unsteadiness of his potsherds, rose and hurried into the house, with the feeble wail of his baby in his ears.

CHAPTER XXXI.

AN ADDITION TO THE FAMILY.

THE door to the kitchen was open: Tommy must be in the garden again! When he reached the nursery, as he called it to himself, he found the baby as he had left her, but moaning and wailing piteously. She looked as if she had cried till she was worn out. He threw down the clothes to take her. A great rat sprang from the bed. On one of the tiny feet the long thin toes were bleeding and raw. The same instant arose a loud scampering and scuffling and squealing in the room. Clare's heart quivered. He thought it was a whole army of rats. He was not a bit afraid of them himself, but assuredly they were not company for baby! Already they had smelt food in the house, and come in a swarm! What was to be done with the little one? If he stayed at home with her, she must die of hunger; if he left her alone, the rats would eat her! They had begun already! Oh, that wretch, Tommy! Into the water-but he should go!

I hope their friends will not take it ill that, all his life after, Clare felt less kindly disposed toward rats than toward the rest of the creatures of God.

But things were not nearly so bad as Clare thought: the scuffling came from quite another cause. It suddenly ceased, and a sharp scream followed. Clare turned with the baby in his arms. Almost at his feet, gazing up at him, the rat hanging limp from his jaws, stood the little castaway mongrel he had seen in the morning. his eyes

flaming, and his tail wagging with wild homage and the delight of presenting the rat to one he would fain make his master.

"You darling!" cried Clare, and meant the dog this time, not the baby. The animal dropped the dead rat at his feet, and glared, and wagged, and looked hunger incarnate, but would not touch the rat until Clare told him to take it. Then he retired with it to a corner, and made a rapid meal of it.

He had seen Clare pass the second time, had doubtless noted that now he carried a loaf, and had followed him in humble hope. Clare was too much occupied with his own joy to perceive him, else he would certainly have given him a little peeling or two from the outside of the bread. But it was decreed that the dog should have the honour of rendering the first service. Clare was not to do *all* the benevolences.

What a happy day it had been for him! It was a day to be remembered for ever! He had work! he had sixpence a day! he had had a present of milk for the baby, and two presents of bread—one a small, and one a large loaf! And now here was a dog! A dog was more than many meals! The family was four now! A baby, and a dog to take care of the baby!—It was heavenly!

He made haste and gave his baby what milk and water was left. Then he washed her poor torn foot, wrapped it in a pillow-case, for he would not tear anything, and laid her in the bed. Next he cut a good big crust from the loaf and gave it to the dog, who ate it as if the rat were nowhere. The rest he put in a drawer. Then he washed his face and hands—as well as he could without soap. After that, he took the dog, talked to him a little,

laid him on the bed beside the baby and talked to him again, telling him plainly, and impressing upon him, that his business was the care of the baby; that he must give himself up to her; that he must watch and tend, and, if needful, fight for the little one. When at length he left him, it was evident to Clare, by the solemnity of the dog's face, that he understood his duty thoroughly.

CHAPTER XXXII.

SHOP AND BABY.

ONCE clear of the well and the wall, Clare set off running like a gaze-hound. Such was the change produced in him by joy and the satisfaction of hope, that when he entered the shop, no one at first knew him. His face was as the face of an angel, and none the less beautiful that it shone above ragged garments. But Mr. Maidstone, the moment he saw him, and before he had time to recognize him, turned from the boy with dislike.

"What a fool the beggar looks!" he said to himself;—then aloud to one of the young men, "Hand over that parcel of sheets.—Here, you!—what's your name?"

"Clare, sir."

'I declare against it!" he rejoined, with a coarse laugh of pleasure at his own fancied wit. "I shall call you Jack!"

"Very well, sir!"

"Don't you talk.—Here, Jack, take this parcel to Mrs. Trueman's. You'll see the address on it.—And look sharp.—You can read, can't you?"

The people in the shop stood looking on, some pitifully, all curiously, for the parcel was of considerable size, and linen is heavy, while the boy looked pale and thin. But Clare was strong for his age, and present joy made up for past want. He scarcely looked at the parcel which the draper proceeded to lay on his shoulder, stooped a little as he felt its weight, heaved it a little to adjust its balance, and holding it in its place with one hand, started for the door, which the master himself held open for him.

"Please, sir, which way do I turn?" he asked.

"To the left," answered Mr. Maidstone. "Ask your way as you go."

Clare forgot that he had heard only the lady's name. Her address was on the parcel, no doubt, but if he dropped it to look, he could not get it up again by himself. A little way on, therefore, meeting a boy about his own age returning from school, he asked him to be kind enough to read the address on his back and direct him. The boy read it aloud, but gave him false instructions for finding the place. Clare walked and walked until the weight became almost unendurable, and at last, though loath, concluded that the boy must have deceived him. He asked again, but this time of a lady. She took pains not only to tell him right, but to make him understand right: she was pleased with the tired gentle face that looked up from beneath the heavy burden. Perhaps she thought of the proud souls growing pure of their pride, in Dante's *Purgatorio*. Following her directions, he needed no further questioning to find the house. But it was hours after the burden was gone from his shoulder before it was rid of the phantom of its weight.

His master rated him for having been so long, and

would not permit him to explain his delay, ordering him to hold his tongue and not answer back; but the rest of his day's work was lighter; there was no other heavy parcel to send out. There were so many smaller ones, however, that, by the time they were all delivered, he had gained something more than a general idea of how the streets lay, and was a weary wight when, with the fourpence his master hesitated to give him on the ground that he was doubtful of his character, he set out at last, walking soberly enough now, to spend it at Mr. Ball's and the milk-shop. Of the former he bought a stale three-penny loaf, and the baker added a piece to make up the weight. Clare took this for liberality, and returned hearty thanks, which Mr. Ball, I am sorry to say, was not man enough to repudiate. The other penny he laid out on milk—but oh, how inferior it was to that the farmer's wife had given him! The milk-woman, however, not ungraciously granted him the two matches he begged for.

On his way to baby, he almost hoped Tommy would not return: he would gladly be saved putting him in the water-but!

He forgot him again as he drew near the nursery, and for a long while after he reached it. He found the infant and the dog lying as he had left them. The only sign that either had moved was the strange cleanness of the tiny gray face which Clare had not ventured to wash. It gave indubitable evidence that the dog had been licking it more than a little—probably every few minutes since he was left curate in charge.

And now Clare did with deliberation a thing for which his sensitive conscience not unfrequently reproached him afterward. His defence was, that he had hurt nobody,

and had kept baby alive by it. Having in his mind revolved the matter many a time that day, he got some sticks together from the garden, and with one of the precious matches lighted a small fire of coals that were not his own, and for which he could merely hope one day to restore amends. But baby! Baby was more than coals! He filled a rusty kettle with water, and while it was growing hot on the fire, such was his fear lest the smoke should betray them, that he ran out every other minute to see how much was coming from the chimney.

While the fire was busy heating the water, he was busier preparing a bottle for baby—making a hole through the cork of a phial, putting the broken stem of a clean tobacco pipe he had found in the street through the hole, tying a small lump of cotton wool over the end of the pipe-stem, and covering that with a piece of his pocket-handkerchief, carefully washed with the brown Windsor soap, his mother's last present. For the day held yet another gladness: in looking for a kettle he had found the soap—which probably the rat had carried away and hidden before finding baby. Through the pipe-stem and the wool and the handkerchief he could without difficulty draw water, and hoped therefore baby would succeed in drawing her supper. As soon as the water was warm he mixed some with the milk, but not so much this time, and put the mixture in the bottle. To his delight, the baby sucked it up splendidly. The bottle, thought out between the heavy linen and the hard street, was a success! Labour is not unfriendly to thought, as the annals of weaving and shoe-making witness.

And now at last was Clare equipped for a great attempt: he was going to wash the baby! He was glad that dis-

respectful Tommy was not in the house. With a basin of warm water and his precious piece of soap he set about it, and taking much pains washed his treasure perfectly clean. It was a state of bliss in which, up to that moment, I presume, she had never been since her birth. In the process he handled her, if not with all the skill of a nurse, yet with the tenderness of a mother. His chief anxiety was not to hurt, more than could not be helped, the poor little rat-eaten toes. He felt he must wash them, but when in the process she whimpered, it went all through the calves of his legs. When the happy but solicitous task was over, during which the infant had shown the submission of great weakness, he wrapped her in another blanket, and laid her down again. Soothed and comfortable, as probably never soothed or comfortable before, she went to sleep.

As soon as she was out of his arms, he took a piece of bread, and with some of the hot water made a little sop for the dog, which the small hero, whose four legs carried such a long barrel of starvation, ate with undisguised pleasure and thankfulness. For his own supper Clare preferred his bread dry, following it with a fine draught of water from the well.

Then, and not till then, returned the thought—what had Tommy done with himself? Left to himself he was sure to go stealing! He might have been taken in the act! Clare could hardly believe he had actually run away from him. On the other hand, he had left the baby, and knew that if he returned he would be put in the water-but! He might have come to the conclusion that he could do better without Clare, who would not let him steal! It was clear he did not like taking his share in the

work of the family, and looking after the baby! Had he been anything of a true boy, Clare would have taken his bread in his hand and gone to look for him; being such as he was, he did not think it necessary. He felt bound to do his best for him if he came back, but he did not feel bound to leave the baby and roam the country to find a boy with whom baby's life would be in constant danger.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A BAD PENNY.

BEFORE Clare had done his thinking, darkness had fallen, and, weary to the very bones, he threw himself on the bed beside the baby. The dog jumped up and laid himself at his feet, as if the place had been his from time immemorial—as it had perhaps been, according to time in dog-land. The many pleasures of that blessed day would have kept Clare awake had they not brought with them so much weariness. He fell fast asleep.

Tommy had not had a happy day: he had been found out in evil-doing, had done more evil, and had all the day been in dread of punishment. He did not foresee how ill things would go for him—did not see that a rat had taken his place beside the baby, and that he would not get back before Clare; but the vision of the water-but had often flashed upon his inner eye, and it had not been the bliss of his solitude. He deserted his post in the hope of finding something to eat, and had not had a mouthful of anything but spongy turnip, and dried-up mangel-wurzel, or want-root. If he had been minding his work, he would have had

a piece of good bread—so good that he would have wanted more of it, whereas, when he had eaten the turnip and the beetroot, he had cause to wish he had not eaten so much! He had been set upon by boys bigger than himself, and nearly as bad, who, not being hungry, were in want of amusement, and had proceeded to get it out of Tommy, just as Tommy would have got it out of the baby had he dared. They bullied him in a way that would have been to his heart's content, had he been the bully instead of the bullied. They made him actually wish he had stayed with the baby—and therewith came the thought that it was time to go home if he would get back before Clare. As to what had taken place in the morning, he knew Clare's forgivingness, and despised him for it. If he found the baby dead, or anything happened to her that he could not cover with lying, it would be time to cut and run in earnest! So the moment he could escape from his tormenters, off went Tommy for home. But as he ran he remembered that there was but one way into the house, and that was by the very lip of the water-but.

Clare woke up suddenly—at a sound which all his life would wake him from the deepest slumber: he thought he heard the whimpering of a child. The baby was fast asleep. Instantly he thought of Tommy. He seemed to see him shut out in the night, and knew at once how it was with him: he had gone out without thinking how he was to get back, and dared not go near the water-but! He jumped out of bed, put on his shoes, and in a minute or two was over the wall and walking along the lane outside of it, to find the deserter.

The moon was not up, and the night was dark, yet he

had not looked long before he came upon him, as near the house as he could get, crouching against the wall.

"Tommy!" said Clare softly.

Tommy did not reply. The fear of the water-but was upon him—a fear darker than the night, an evil worse than hunger or cold—and Clare and the water-but were one.

"You needn't think to hide, Tommy; I see you, you bad boy!" whispered Clare. "After all I said, you ran away and left the baby to the rats! They've been biting her horribly—one at least has. You can stay away as long as you like now; I've got a better nurse. Good-night!"

Tommy gave a great howl.

"Hold your tongue, you rascal!" cried Clare, still in a whisper. "You'll let the police know where we are!"

"Do let me in, Clare! I'm so 'ungry and so cold!"

"Then I shall have to put you in the water-but! I said I would!"

"If you don't promise not to, I'll go straight to the police. They'll take the brat from you, and put her in the workhouse!"

Clare thought for a moment whether it would not be right to kill such a traitor. His mind was full of history-tales, and, like Dante, he put treachery in its own place, namely the deepest hell. But with the thought came the words he had said so many times without thinking what they meant—"Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us," and he saw that he was expected to forgive Tommy.

"Tommy, I forgive you," he said solemnly, "and will be friends with you again; but I have said it, and I was

right to say it, and into the water-but you must go! I can't trust your word now, and I think I shall be able to trust it after that."

Ere he had finished the words, Tommy lifted up his voice in a most unearthly screech.

Instantly Clare had him by the throat, so that he could not utter a sound.

"Tommy," he said, "I'm going to let you breathe again, but the moment you make a noise, I'll choke you as I'm doing now."

With that he relaxed his hold. But Tommy had paid no heed to what he said, and began a second screech the moment he found passage for it. Immediately he was choked, and after two or three attempts, finally desisted.

"I won't!" he said.

"You shall, Tommy. You're going head over in the but. We're going to it now!"

Tommy threw himself upon the ground and kicked, but dared not scream. It was awful! He would drop right through into the great place where the moon was!

Clare threw him over his shoulder, and found him not half the weight of the parcel of linen. Tommy would have bitten like a weasel, but he feared Clare's terrible hands. He was on the back of Giant Despair, in the form of one of the best boys in the world. Clare took him round the wall, and over the fence into the blacksmith's yard. The smithy was quite dark.

"Please, I didn't mean to do it!" sobbed Tommy from behind him, as Clare bore him steadily up the yard. It was all he could do to say the words, for the thought of what they were approaching sent a scream into his throat every time he parted his lips to speak

Clare stopped.

"What didn't you mean to do?" he asked.

"I didn't mean to leave the baby."

"How did you do it then?"

"I mean I didn't mean to stay away so long. I didn't know how to get back."

"I told you not to leave her! And you could have got back perfectly, you little coward!"

Tommy shuddered, and said no more. Though hanging over Clare's back he knew presently, by his stopping, that they had come to the heap. There was only that heap and the wall between him and the water-but! Up and up he felt himself slowly, shakingly carried, and was gathering his breath for a final utterance of agony that should rouse the whole neighbourhood, when Clare, having reached the top, seated himself upon the wall, and Tommy restrained himself in the hope of what a parley might bring. But he sat down only to wheel on the pivot of his spine, as he had seen them do on the counter in the shop, and sit with his legs alongside of the water-but. Then he drew Tommy from his shoulder, in spite of his clinging, and laid him across his knees; and Tommy, divining there were words yet to be said, and hoping to get off with a beating, which he did not mind, remained silent.

"Your hour is come, Tommy!" said Clare. "If you scream, I will drop you in, and hold you only by one leg. If you don't scream, I will hold you by both legs. If you scream when I take you out, in you go again! I do what I say, Tommy!"

The wretched boy was nearly mad with terror. But now, much as he feared the water, he feared yet more for

the moment him in whom lay the power of the water. Clare took him by the heels.

"I'm sorry there's no moon, as I promised you," he said; "she won't come up for my calling. I should have liked you to see where you were going. But if you ain't an honest boy after this, you shall have another chance; and next time we will wait for the moon!"

With that he lifted Tommy's legs, holding him by the ankles, and would have shoved his body over the edge of the but into the water. But Tommy clung fast to his knees.

"Leave go, Tommy," he said, "or I'll tumble you right in."

Tommy yielded, his will overcome by a greater fear. Clare let him hang for a moment over the black water, and slowly lowered him. Tommy clung to the side of the but. Clare let go one leg, and taking hold of his hands pulled them away. Tommy's terror would have burst in a frenzied yell, but the same instant he was down to the neck in the water, and lifted out again. He spluttered and gurgled and tried to scream.

"Now, Tommy," said Clare, "don't scream, or I'll put you in again."

But Tommy never believed anything except upon compulsion. The moment he could, that moment he screamed, and that moment he was in the water again. The next time he was taken out, he did not scream. Clare laid him on the wall, and he lay still, pretending to be drowned. Clare got up, set him on his feet in front of him, and holding him by the collar, trotted him round the top of the wall to the door, and dropped him into the garden. He was quiet enough now—more than subdued—in-

capable even of meditating revenge. But when they entered the nursery, the dog, taking Tommy for a worse sort of rat, made a leap at him right off the bed, as if he would swallow him alive, and the start and the terror of it brought him quite to himself again.

"Quiet, Abdiel!" said Clare.

The dog turned, jumped up on the bed, and lay down again close to the baby.

Clare, who, I have said, was in old days a reader of *Paradise Lost*, had already given him the name of *Abdiel*.

"Please, I couldn't help yelling!" said Tommy, very meekly. "I didn't know you'd got *him!*"

"I know you couldn't help it!" answered Clare. "What have you had to eat to-day?"

"Nothing but a beastly turnip and a wormy beet," said Tommy. "I'm awful hungry."

"You'd have had something better if you'd stuck by the baby, and not left her to the rats!"

"There ain't no rats," growled Tommy.

"Will you believe your own eyes?" returned Clare, and showed him the skin of the rat Abdiel had slain. "I've a great mind to make you eat it!" he added, dangling it before him by the tail.

"Shouldn't mind," said Tommy. "I've eaten a rat afore now, an' I'm that hungry! Rats ain't bad to eat. I don't know about their skins!"

"Here's a piece of bread for you. But you sha'n't sleep with honest people like baby and Abdiel. You shall lie on the hearth-rug. Here's a blanket and a pillow for you!"

Clare covered him up warm, thatching all with a piece of loose carpet, and he was asleep directly.

The next day all terror of the water-but was gone from the little vagabond's mind. He was now, however, thoroughly afraid of Clare, and his conceit that, though Clare was the stronger, he was the cleverer, was put in abeyance.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

HOW THINGS WENT FOR A TIME.

CLARE'S next day went much as the preceding, only that he was early at the shop. When his dinner-hour came, he ran home, and was glad to find Tommy and the dog mildly agreeable to each other. He had but time to give baby some milk, and Tommy and Abdiel a bit of bread each.

His look when he returned, a look of which he was unaware, but which one of the girls, who had a year ago been hungry for weeks together, could read, made her ask him what he had had for dinner. He said he had had no dinner.

"Why?" she asked.

"Because there wasn't any."

"Didn't your mother keep some for you?"

"No; she couldn't."

"Then what will you do?"

"Go without," answered Clare with a smile.

"But you've got a mother?" said the girl, rendered doubtful by his smile.

"Oh, yes! I've got two mothers. But their arms ain't long enough," replied Clare.

The girl wondered: was he an idiot, or what they

called a poet? Anyhow, she had a bun in her pocket, which she had meant to eat at five o'clock, and she offered him that.

"But what will you do yourself? Have you another?" asked Clare, unready to take it.

"No," she answered; "why shouldn't I go without as well as you?"

"Because it won't make things any better. There will be just as much hunger. It's only shifting it from me to you. That will leave it all the same!"

"No, not the same," she returned. "I've had a good dinner—as much as I could eat; and you've had none!"

Clare was persuaded, and ate the girl's bun with much satisfaction and gratitude.

When he had his wages in the evening, he spent them as before—a penny for the baby, and fivepence at Mr. Ball's for Tommy, Abdiel, and himself.

Observing that he came daily, and spent all he earned, except one penny, on bread; seeing also that the boy's cheeks, though plainly he was in good health, were very thin, Mr. Ball wondered a little: a boy ought to look better than that on five pennyworth of bread a day!

They were a curious family—Clare, and Tommy, and the baby, and Abdiel. But the only thing sad about it was, that Clare, who was the head and the heart of it, and provided for all, should be upheld by no human sympathy, no human gratitude; that he should be so high above his companions that, though he never thought he was lonely, he could not help feeling lonely. Not once did he wish himself rid of any single member of his adopted family. It was living on his very body; he was growing a little thinner every day; if things had gone on

so, he must before long have fallen ill; but he never thought of himself at all, body or soul.

He had no human sympathy or gratitude, I say, but he had both sympathy and gratitude from Abdiel. The dog never failed to understand what Clare wished and expected him to understand. In Clare's absence he took on himself the protection of the establishment, and was Tommy's superior.

Though Tommy was of no use to earn bread, Clare did not therefore allow him to be idle. He insisted on his keeping the place clean and tidy, and in this respect Tommy was not quite a failure. He even made him do some washing, though not much could be accomplished in that way where there was so little to wash. Now that Abdiel was nurse, Tommy had the run of the garden, and often went beyond it for an hour or two without Clare's knowledge, but always took good care to be back before his return.

A bale of goods happening to be unpacked in his presence one day, Clare begged the head-shopman, who was also a partner, for a piece of what it was wrapped in; and he, having noted how well he worked, and being quite aware they could not get another such boy at such wages, gave him a large piece of the soiled canvas. Now Mrs. Porson had taught Clare to work,—as I think all boys ought to be taught, so as not to be helpless without mother or sister,—and with the help of a needle and some thread the friendly girl gave him, he soon made of the packing-sheet a pair of trousers for Tommy, of a primitive but not unserviceable cut, and a shirt for himself, of fashion more primitive still. He managed it this way: he cut a hole in the middle of a piece of the

stuff, through which to put his head, and another hole on each side of that, through which to put his arms, and hemmed them all round. Then, having first hemmed the garment also, he indued it, and let the voluminous mass arrange itself as it might, under as much of his jacket and trousers as cohered.

My reader may well wonder how, in what was called a respectable shop, he could be permitted to appear in such poverty; but Mr. Maidstone disliked the boy so much that he meant to send him away the moment he found another to do his work, and gave orders that he should never come up from the basement except when wanted to carry a parcel. The fact was that his still, solemn, pure face was a haunting rebuke to his master, although he did not in the least recognize the nature, or this as the cause, of his dislike.

CHAPTER XXXV.

CLARE DISREGARDS THE INTERESTS OF HIS EMPLOYERS.

THINGS went on for nearly a month, every one thriving but Clare. Yet was Clare as peaceful as any, and much happier than Tommy, to whose satisfaction adventure was needful.

One day, a lady, attracted by a muff in the shop-window labelled with a very low price, entered, and requested to see it.

"We can offer you a choice from several of the sort, madam," said the shopman. "It is one of a lot we bought cheap, but quite uninjured, after a fire."

"I want to see the one in the window," the lady answered.

"I hope you will excuse me, madam," returned the shopman. "The muff is in a position hard to reach. Besides, we must ask leave to take anything down after the window is dressed for the day, and the master is out. But I will bring you the same fur precisely."

So saying, he went, and returned presently with a load of muffs and other furs, which he threw on the counter. But the lady had heard that "there's tricks i' the world," and persisted in demanding a sight of the muff in the window. Being a "tall personage" and cool, she carried her point. The muff was hooked down and brought her —not graciously. She glanced at it, turned it over, looked inside, and said,

"I will take it. Please bring a bandbox for it."

"I will, madam," said the man, and would have taken the muff. But she held it fast, sought her purse, and laid the price on the counter. The shopman saw that she knew what both of them were about, took up the money, went and fetched a bandbox, put the muff in it before her eyes, and tied it up. The lady held out her hand for it.

"Shall I not send it for you, madam?" he said.

"I do not live here," she answered. "I am on my way to the station."

"Here, Jack," cried the shopman to Clare, whom he caught sight of that moment going down to the basement, "take this bandbox, and go with the lady to the station."

If his transaction with the lady had pleased the man, he would not have sent such a scarecrow to attend her, although she did not belong to the town, and they might

never see her again! The lady, on her part, was about to insist on carrying the bandbox herself; but when Clare came forward, and looked up smiling in her face, she was at once aware that she might trust him. The man stood watching for the moment when she should turn her back, that he might substitute another bandbox for the one Clare carried; but Clare never looked at him, and when the lady walked out of the shop, walked straight out after her. Along the street he followed her steadily, she looking round occasionally to see that he was behind her.

They had gone about half-way to the station, when from a side street came a lad whom Clare knew as one employed in the packing-room. He carried a box exactly like that Clare had in his hand, and came softly up behind him. Clare did not turn his head, for he did not want to talk to him while he was attending on the lady.

"Look spry!" he said in a whisper. "She don't twig! It's all right! Maidstone sent me."

Clare looked round. The lad held out his bandbox for him to take, and his empty hand to take Clare's instead. But Clare had by this time begun to learn a little caution. Besides, the lady's interests were in his care, and he could be party to nothing done behind her back! He had not time to think, but knew it his duty to stick by the bandbox. If we have come up through the animals to be what we are, Clare must have been a dog of a good, faithful breed, for he did right now as by some ancient instinct. He held fast to the box, neither slackening his pace nor uttering a word. The lad gave him a great punch. Clare clung the harder to the box. The lady heard something, and turned her head. The

boy already had his back to her, and was walking away, but she saw that Clare's face was flushed.

"What is the matter?" she asked.

"I don't rightly know, ma'am. He wanted me to give him my bandbox for his, and said Mr. Maidstone had sent him. But I couldn't, you know!—except he asked you first. You did pay for it—didn't you, ma'am?"

"Of course I did, or he wouldn't have let me take it away! But if you don't know what it means, I do.—You haven't been in that shop long, have you?"

"Not quite a month, ma'am."

"I thought so!"

She said no more, and Clare followed in silence, wondering not a little. When they reached the station, she took the bandbox, and looked at the boy. He returned her gaze, his gray eyes wondering. She searched her purse for a shilling, but, unable to find one, was not sorry to give him a half-crown instead.

"You had better not mention that I gave you anything?" she said.

"I will not, ma'am, except they ask me," he answered. "But," he added, his face in a glow of delight, "is all this for me?"

"To be sure," she answered. "I am much obliged to you for—carrying my parcel. Be a honest boy whatever comes, and you will not repent it."

"I will try, ma'am," said Clare.

But, to speak accurately, he did not know what it was to *try* to be honest: he had never been tempted to be anything else, and had scarcely had the idea of dishonesty in his mind except in relation to Tommy. Do you say, "Then it was no merit to him"? Certainly it was none.

Who was thinking of merit? Not Clare. He is a sneak who thinks of merit. He is a cad who can't do a gentlemanly action without thinking himself a fine fellow! It might be a merit in many a man to act as Clare did, but in Clare it was pure rightness—or, if you like the word better, righteousness.

Clare as little thought what awaited him. Had there been any truth, any appreciation of honesty in his vulgar heart, Mr. Maidstone could not have done as now he did. When his messenger came back with the tale of how he had been foiled, he said nothing, but his lips grew white. He closed them fast, and went and stood near the door. When Clare, unsuspecting as innocent, opened it, he was met by a blow that dazed him, and a fierce kick that sent him on his back to the curbstone. Almost insensible, but with the impression that something was interfering between him and his work, he returned to the door. As he laid his hand on it, it opened a little, and his master's face, with a hateful sneer upon it, shot into the crack, and spit in his. Then the door shut so sharply that his fingers caught an agonizing pinch. At last he understood: he was turned off, and his day's wages were lost!

What would have become of him now but for the half-crown the lady had given him! She was not *quite* a lady, or she would have walked out of the shop, and declined to gain by frustrating a swindle; but she was a good-hearted woman, and God's messenger to Clare. He bought a bigger loaf than usual, at which, and the time of the day when he bought it, and the half-crown presented in payment, Mr. Ball wondered; but neither said anything—Mr. Ball from indecision, Clare from eagerness to get home to his family.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE POLICEMAN.

BUT, alas! Clare had made another enemy—the lad whose attempt to change the bandboxes he had foiled. The fellow followed him, lurkingly, all the way home—on the watch for fit place to pounce upon him, and punish him for doing right when he wanted him to do wrong. He saw him turn into the opening that led to the well, and thought now he had him. But when he followed him in, he was not to be seen! He did not care to cross the well, not knowing what might meet him on the other side; but here was news to carry back! He did so; and his master saw in them the opportunity of indulging his dislike and revenge, and a means of invalidating whatever Clare might reveal to his discredit!

Clare and the baby and Tommy and Abdiel had taken their supper with satisfaction, and were all asleep. It was to them as the middle of the night, though it was but past ten o'clock, when Abdiel all at once jumped right up on his four legs, cocked his ears, listened, leaped off the bed, ran to the door, and began to bark furiously. He was suddenly blinded by the glare of a bull's-eye-lantern, and received a kick that knocked all the bark out of him, and threw him to the other side of the room. A huge policeman strode quietly in, sending the glare of his bull's-eye all about the room like a vital, inquiring glance. It discovered, one after the other, every member of the family. So tired was Clare, however, that he did

not wake until seized by a rough hand, and at one pull dragged standing on the floor.

"Take care of the baby!" he cried, while yet not half awake.

"*I'll* take care o' the baby, never fear!—an' o' you too, you young rascal!" returned the policeman.

He roused Tommy, who was wide awake, but pretending to be asleep, with a gentle kick.

"Up ye get!" he said; and Tommy got up, rubbing his ferret eyes.

"Come along!" said the policeman.

"Where to?" asked Clare.

"You'll see when you get there."

"But I can't leave baby!"

"Baby must come along too," answered the policeman, more gently, for he had children of his own.

"But she has no clothes to go in!" objected Clare.

"She must go without, then."

"But she'll take cold!"

"She don't run naked in the house, do she?"

"No; she can't run yet. I keep her in a blanket. But the blanket ain't mine; I can't take it with me."

"You're mighty scrup'lous!" returned the policeman. "You don't mind takin' a 'ole 'ouse an' garding, but you wouldn' think o' takin' a blanket!—Oh, no! Honest boy *you* are!"

He turned sharp round, and caught Tommy taking a vigorous sight at him. Tommy, courageous as a lion behind anybody's back, dropped on the rug sitting.

"We've done the house no harm," said Clare, "and I will *not* take the blanket. It would be stealing!"

"Then I will take it, and be accountable for it," rejoined the man. "I hope that will satisfy you!"

"Certainly," answered Clare. "You are a policeman, and that makes it all right."

"Rouse up then, and come along. I want to get home."

"Please, sir, wouldn't it do in the morning?" pleaded Clare. "I've no work now, and could easily go then. That way we should all have a sleep."

"My eye ain't green enough," replied the policeman. "Look sharp!"

Clare said no more, but went to the baby. With sinking but courageous heart, he wrapped her closer in her blanket, and took her in his arms. He could not help her crying, but she did not scream. Indeed she never really screamed; she was not strong enough to scream.

"Get along," said the policeman.

Clare led the way with his bundle, sorely incommoded by the size and weight of the wrapping blanket, the corners of which, one after the other, would keep working from his hold, and dropping and trailing on the ground. Behind him came Tommy, a scarecrow monkey, with mischievous face, and greedy beads for eyes—type not unknown to the policeman, who brought up the rear, big enough to have all their sizes cut out of him, and yet pass for a man. Down the stair they went, and out at the front door, which Clare for the first time saw open, and so by the iron gate into the street.

"Which way, please?" asked Clare, turning half round with the question.

"To the right, straight ahead. The likes o' you, young un, might know the way to the lock-up without astin'!"

Clare made no answer, but walked obedient. It was a sad procession—comical indeed, but too sad when realized to continue ludicrous. The thin, long-bodied, big-headed, long-haired, long-tailed, short-legged animal that followed last, seemed to close it with a never-ending end.

There was no moon; nothing but the gas-lamps lighted Clare's *Via dolorosa.* He hugged the baby and kept on, laying his cheek to hers to comfort her, and receiving the comfort he did not seek.

They came at last to the *lock-up,* a new building in the rear of the town-house. There this tangle of humanity, torn from its rock and afloat on the social sea, drifted trailing into a bare brilliant room, and at its head, cast down but not destroyed, went heavy-laden Clare, with so much in him, but only his misery patent to eyes too much used to misery to reap sorrow from the sight.

The head policeman—they called him the inspector—received the charge, that of house-breaking, and entered it. Then they were taken away to the lock-up—all but the faithful Abdiel, who, following, received another of the kicks which that day rained on every member of that epitome of the human family except the baby, who, small enough for a mother to drown, was too small for a policeman to kick. The door was shut upon them, and they had to rest in that grave till the resurrection of the morning should bring them before the magistrate.

Their quarters were worse than chilly—to all but the baby in her blanket manifoldly wrapped about her, and in Clare's arms. Tommy would gladly have shared that blanket, more gladly yet would have taken it all for himself and left the baby to perish; but he had to lie on the broad wooden bench and make the best of it, which

he did by snoring all the night. It passed drearily for Clare, who kept wide awake. He was not anxious about the morrow; he had nothing to be ashamed of, therefore nothing to fear; but he had baby to protect and cherish, and he dared not go to sleep.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE MAGISTRATE.

THE dawn came at last, and soon after the dawn footsteps, but they approached only to recede. When the door at length opened, it was but to let a pair of eyes glance round on them, and close again. The hours seemed to be always beginning, and never going on. But at the long last came the big policeman. To Clare's loving eyes, how friendly he looked!

"Come, kids!" he said, and took them through a long passage to a room in the town-hall, where sat a formal-looking old gentleman behind a table.

"Good morning, sir!" said Clare, to the astonishment of the magistrate, who set his politeness down as impudence. Nor was the mistake to be wondered at; for the baby in Clare's arms hid, with the mountain-like folds of its blanket, the greater part of his face, and the old gentleman's eyes fell first on Tommy; and if ever *scamp* was written clear on a countenance, it was written clear on Tommy's.

"Hold your impudent tongue!" said a policeman, and gave Clare a cuff on the head.

"Hold, John," interposed the magistrate; "it is my part to punish, not yours."

"Thank you, sir," said Clare.

"I will thank *you*, sir," returned the magistrate, "not to speak till I put to you the questions I am about to put to you.—What is the charge against the prisoners?"

"Housebreaking, sir," answered the big man.

"What! Housebreaking! Boys with a baby! Housebreakers don't generally go about with babies in their arms! Explain the thing."

The policeman said he had received information that unlawful possession had been taken of a building commonly known as The Haunted House, which had been in Chancery for no one could tell how many years. He had gone to see, and had found the accused in possession of the best bedroom—fast asleep, surrounded by indications that they had made themselves at home there for some time. He had brought them along.

The magistrate turned his eyes on Clare.

"You hear what the policeman says?" he said.

"Yes, sir," answered Clare.

"Well?"

"Sir?"

"What have you to say to it?"

"Nothing, sir."

"Then you allow it is true?"

"Yes, sir."

"What right had you to be there?"

"None, sir. But we had nowhere else to go, and nobody seemed to want the place. We didn't hurt anything. We swept away a multitude of dead moths, and

killed a lot of live ones, and destroyed a whole granary of grubs; and the dog killed a great rat."

"What is your name?"

"Clare—Porson," answered Clare, with a little intervening hesitation.

"You are not quite sure?"

"Yes; that is my name; but I have another older one that I don't know."

"A bad answer! The name you go by is not your own! Hum! Is that boy your brother?"

"No, sir."

"Your cousin?"

"No, sir; he's not any relation of mine. He's a tramp."

"And what are you?"

"Something like one now, sir, but I wasn't always."

"What were you?"

"Not much, sir. I didn't *do* anything till just lately."

He could not bear at the moment to talk of his beloved dead. He felt as if the old gentleman would be rude to them.

"Is the infant there your sister?"

"She's my sister the big way: God made her. She's not my sister any other way."

"How does she come to be with you then?"

"I took her out of the water-but. Some one threw her in, and I heard the splash, and went and got her out."

"Why did you not take her to the police?"

"I never thought of that. It was all I could do to keep her alive. I couldn't have done it if we hadn't got into the house."

"How long ago is that?

"Nearly a month, sir."

"And you've kept her there ever since?"

"Yes, sir—as well as I could. I had only sixpence a day."

"And what's that boy's name?"

"Tommy, sir.—I don't know any other."

"Nice respectable company you keep for one who has evidently been well brought up!"

"Baby's quite respectable, sir!"

"Hum!"

"And for Tommy, if I didn't keep him, he would steal. I'm teaching him not to steal."

"What woman have you got with you?"

"Baby's the only woman we've got, sir."

"But who attends to her?"

"I do, sir. She only wants washing and rolling round in the blanket; she's got no clothes to speak of. When I'm away, Tommy and Abdiel take care of her."

"Abdiel! Who on earth is that? Where is he?" said the magistrate, looking round for some fourth member of the incomprehensible family.

"He's not on earth, sir; he's in heaven—the good angel, you know, sir, that left Satan and came back again to God."

"You must take him to the county-asylum, James!" said the magistrate, turning to the tall policeman.

"Oh, he's all right, sir!" said James.

"Please, sir," interrupted Clare eagerly, "I didn't mean the dog was in heaven yet. I meant the angel I named him after!"

"They *had* a little dog with them, sir!"

"Yes—Abdiel. He wanted to be a prisoner too, but they wouldn't let him in. He's a good dog—better than Tommy."

"So! like all the rest of you, you can keep a dog!"

"He followed me home because he hadn't anybody to love," said Clare. "He don't have much to eat, but he's content. He would eat three times as much if I could give it him; but he never complains"

"Have you work of any sort?"

"I had till yesterday, sir."

"Where?"

"At Mr. Maidstone's shop."

"What wages had you?"

"Sixpence a day."

"And you lived, all three of you, on that?"

"Yes; all four of us, sir."

"What do you do at the shop?"

"Please your worship," interposed policeman James, "he was sent about his business yesterday."

"Yes," rejoined Clare, who did not understand the phrase "I was sent with a lady to carry her bandbox to the station."

"And when you came back, you was turned away, wasn't you?" said James.

"Yes, sir."

"What had you done?" asked the magistrate.

"I don't quite know, sir."

"A likely story!"

Clare made no reply.

"Answer me directly."

"Please, sir, you told me not to speak unless you asked me a question."

"I said, 'A likely story!' which meant, 'Do you expect me to believe that?'"

"Of course I do, sir."

"Why?"

"Because it is true."

"How am I to believe that?"

"I don't know, sir. I only know I've got to speak the truth. It's the person who hears it that's got to believe it, ain't it, sir?"

"You've got to prove it."

"I don't think so, sir; I never was told so; I was only told I must speak the truth; I never was told I must prove what I said.—I've been several times disbelieved, I know."

"I should think so indeed!"

"It was by people who did not know me."

"Never by people who did know you?"

"I think not, sir. I never was by the people at home."

"Ah! you could not read what they were thinking!"

"Were you not believed when you were at home, sir?"

The magistrate's doubt of Clare had its source in the fact that, although now he was more careful to speak the truth than are most people, it was not his habit when a boy, and he had suffered severely in consequence. He was annoyed, therefore, at his question, set him down as a hypocritical, boastful prig, and was seized with a strong desire to shame him.

"I remand the prisoner for more evidence. Take the children to the workhouse," he said.

Tommy gave a sudden full-sized howl. He had heard no good of the workhouse.

"The baby is mine!" pleaded Clare.

"Are you the father of it?" said the big policeman.

"Yes, I think so: I saved her life.—She would have

been drowned if I hadn't looked for her when I heard the splash!" reasoned Clare, his face drawn with grief and the struggle to keep from crying.

"She's not yours," said the magistrate. "She belongs to the parish. Take her away, James."

The big policeman came up to take her. Clare would have held her tight, but was afraid of hurting her. He did draw back from the outstretched hands, however, while he put a question or two.

"Please, sir, will the parish be good to her?" he asked.

"Much better than you."

"Will it let me go and see her?" he asked again, with an outbreaking sob.

"You can't go anywhere till you're out of this," answered the big policeman, and, not ungently, took the baby from him.

"And when will that be, please?" asked Clare, with his empty arms still held out.

"That depends on his worship there."

"Hold your tongue, James," said the magistrate. "Take the boy away, John."

"Please, sir, where am I going to?" asked Clare.

"To prison, till we find out about you."

"Please, sir, I didn't mean to steal her. I didn't know the parish wanted her!"

"Take the boy away, I tell you!" cried the magistrate angrily. "His tongue goes like the hopper of a mill!"

James, carrying the baby on one arm, was already pushing Tommy before him by the neck. Tommy howled, and rubbed his red eyes with what was left him of cuffs, but did not attempt resistance.

"Please, don't let anybody hold her upside down, policeman!" cried Clare. "She doesn't like it!—Oh, baby! baby!"

John tightened his grasp on his arm, and hurried him away in another direction.

Where the big policeman issued with his charge, there was Abdiel hovering about as if his spring were wound up so tight that it wouldn't go off. How he came to be at that door, I cannot imagine.

When he spied Tommy, he rushed at him. Tommy gave him a kick that rolled him over.

"Don't want *you*, you mangy beast!" he said, and tried to kick him again.

Abdiel kept away from him after that, but followed the party to the workhouse, where also, to his disgust, plainly expressed, he was refused admittance. He returned to the entrance by which Clare had vanished from his eyes the night before, and lay down there. I suspect he had an approximate canine theory of the whole matter. He knew at least that Clare had gone in with the others at that door; that he had not come out with them at the other door; that, therefore, in all probability, he was within that door still.

The police made inquiry at Mr. Maidstone's shop. Reasons for his dismissal were there given involving no accusation: there was little desire in that quarter to have the matter searched into. There was therefore nothing to the discredit of the boy, beyond his running to earth in the neglected house like a wild animal. After three days he was set at liberty.

As the big policeman led the way to the door to send him out, Clare addressed him thus:

"Please, Mr. James, may I go back to the house for a little while?"

"Well, you *are* an innocent!" said James; "—or," he added, "the biggest little humbug ever I see!—No, it's not likely!"

"I only wanted," explained Clare, "to set things straight a bit. The house is cleaner than it was, I know, but it is not in such good order as when we went into it. I don't like to leave it worse than we found it."

"Never you heed," said James, believing him perfectly before he knew what he was about. "The house don't belong to nobody, so far as ever I heerd, an' the things 'll rot all the same wherever they stand."

"But I should like," persisted Clare.

"I couldn't do it off my own hook, an' his worship would think you only wanted to steal something. The best thing you can do is to leave the place at once, an' go where nobody knows nothing agin you."

Thought Clare with himself, "If the house doesn't belong to anybody, why wouldn't they let me stay in it?"

But the policeman opened the door, and as he was turning to say good-bye to him, gave him a little shove, and closed it behind him.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE WORKHOUSE.

HE went into the street with a white face and a dazed look—not from any hardship he had experienced during his confinement, for he had been in what to him

was clover, but because he had lost the baby and Abdiel, and because his mind had been all the time in perplexity with regard to the proceedings of justice: he did not and could not see that he had done anything wrong. Throughout his life it never mattered much to Clare to be accused of anything wrong, but it did trouble him, this time at least, to be punished for doing what was right. He took it very quietly, however.

Indignation may be a sign of innocence, but it is no necessary consequence of innocence any more than it is a proof of righteousness. A man will be fiercely indignant at an accusation that happens to be false, who did the very thing last week, and is ready to do it again. Indignation against wrong to another even, is no proof of a genuine love of fair play. Clare hardly resented anything done to himself. His inward unconscious purity held him up, and made him look events in the face with an eye that was single and therefore at once forgiving and fearless. The man who has no mote in his own eye cannot be knocked down by the beam in his neighbour's; while he who is busy with the mote in his neighbour's may stumble to destruction over the beam in his own.

White and dazed as he came out, the moment he stepped across the threshold, Clare met the comfort of God waiting for him. His eyes blinded with the great light, for it was a glorious morning in the beginning of June, he found himself assailed in unknightly fashion below the knee: there, to his unspeakable delight, was Abdiel, clinging to him with his fore-legs, and wagging his tail as if, like the lizards for terror, he would shake it off for gladness! What a blessed little pendulum was Abdiel's tail! It went by that weight of the clock of the

universe called devotion. It was the escapement of that delight which is of the essence of existence, and which, when God has set right "our disordered clocks," will be its very consciousness.

Clare stood for a moment and looked about him. The needle of his compass went round and round. It had no north. He could not go back to the shop; he could not go back to the house; baby was in the workhouse, but he could not stay there even if they would let him! Neither could he stop in the town; the policeman said he must go away! Where was he to go? There was not in the world one place for him better than another! But they would let him see baby before he went!—and off he set to find the workhouse.

Abdiel followed quietly at his heel, for his master walked lost in thought, and Abdiel was too hungry to make merry without his notice. Clare, fresh to the world, had been a great reader for one so young, and could encounter new experience with old knowledge. In his mind stood a pile of fir-cones, and dried sticks, and old olive wood, which the merest touch of experience would set in a blaze of practical conclusion. But the workhouse was so near that his reflections before he reached it amounted only to this—that there are worse places than a prison when you have done nothing to deserve being put in it. A palace may be one of them. You get enough to eat in a prison; in a palace you do not; you get too much!

The porter at the workhouse informed him it was not the day for seeing the inmates; but the tall policeman had given Clare a hint, and he requested to see the matron. After much demur and much entreaty, the man went and told the matron. She, knowing the story of

the baby, wanted to see Clare, and was so much pleased with his manners and looks, that his sad clothes pleaded for and not against him. She took him at once to the room where the baby was with many more, telling him he must prove she was his by picking her out. It was not wonderful that Clare, who knew the faces of animals so well, should know his own baby the moment he saw her, notwithstanding that she was decently clothed, and had already improved in appearance. But the nurses declared they had never before seen a man, not to say a boy, who could tell one baby from another.

"Why," rejoined Clare, "my dog Abdiel could pick out the baby he was nurse to!"

"Ah, but he's a dog!"

"And I'm a boy!" said Clare.

He descried her on the lap of an old woman, seeming to him very old, who was at the head of the nursery-department. Old as she was, however, she had a keen eye, and a handsome countenance, with a quantity of white hair. Unlike the rest of the women, though not far removed from them socially, she knew several languages, so far as to read and enjoy books in them. Now and then a great woman may be found in a workhouse, like a first folio of Shakspere on a bookstall, among—oh, such companions!

"Let me take her," said Clare modestly, holding out his hands for the baby.

"Are you sure you will not let her drop?"

"Why, ma'am," answered Clare, "she's my own baby! It was I took her out of the water-but! I washed and fed her every day!—not that I could do it so well as you, ma'am!"

She gave him the baby, and watched him with the eye of a seeress, for she had a wonderful insight into character, and that is one of the roots of prophecy.

"You are a good and true lad," she said at length, "and a hard success lies before you. I don't know what you will come to, but, with those eyes, and that forehead, and those hands, if you come to anything but good, you will be terribly to blame."

"I will try to be good, ma'am," said Clare simply. "But I wish I knew what they put me in prison for!"

"What, indeed, my lamb!" she returned; and her eyes flashed with indignation under the cornice of her white hair. "They'll be put in prison one day themselves that did it!"

"Oh, I don't mind!" said Clare. "I don't want them to be punished. You see I'm only waiting!"

"What are you waiting for, sonny?" asked the old woman.

"I don't exactly know—though I know better than what I was put in prison for. Nobody ever told me anything, but I'm always waiting for something."

"The something will come, child. You will have what you want! Only go on as you're doing, and you'll be a great man one day."

"I don't want to be a great man," answered Clare; "I'm only waiting till what is coming does come."

The woman cast down her eyes, and seemed lost in thought. Clare dandled the baby gently in his arms, and talked loving nonsense to her.

"Well," said the old woman, raising at length her eyes, with a look of reverence in them, to Clare's, "I can't help

you, and you want no help of mine. I've got no money, but—"

"I've got plenty of money, ma'am," interrupted Clare. "I've got a whole shilling in my pocket!"

"Bless the holy innocent!" murmured the woman. "—Well, I can only promise you this—that as long as I live, the baby sha'n't forget you; and I ain't so old as I look."

Here the matron came up, and said he had better be going now; but if he came back any day after a month, he should see the baby again.

"Thank you, ma'am," replied Clare. "Keep her a good baby, please. I will come for her one day."

"Please God I live to see that day!" said the old woman. "I think I shall."

She did live to see it, though I cannot tell that part of the story now.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

AWAY.

SO Clare went once more into the street, where Abdiel was again watching for him, and stood on the pavement, not knowing which way to turn. The big policeman had told him that no one there would give him work after what had happened; and now, therefore, he was only waiting for a direction to present itself. In a moment it occurred to him that, having come in at one end of the town, he had better go out at the other. He followed the suggestion, and Abdiel followed him—his

head hanging and his tail also, for the joy of recovering his master had used up all the remnant of wag there was in his clock. He had no more frolic or scamper in him now than when Clare first saw him. How the poor thing had subsisted during the last few days, it were hard to tell. It was much that he had escaped death from ill-usage. Meanest of wretches are the boys or men that turn like grim death upon the helpless. Except they change their way, helplessness will overtake them like a thief, and they will look for some one to deliver them and find none. Traitors to those whom it is their duty to protect, they will one day find themselves in yet more pitiful plight than ever were they. But I fear they will not believe it before their fate has them by the throat.

Clare saw that the dog was famished. He stopped at a butcher's and bought him a scrap of meat for a penny. Then he had elevenpence with which to begin the world afresh, and was not hungry.

Out on the highway they went, in a perfect English summer day, with all the world before them. It was not an oyster for Clare to open with sword, pen, or *sesame;* but he might find a place on the outside of it for all that, and a way over it into a better—one that he *could* open and get at the heart of. The sun shone as on the day of the earthquake—deep in Clare's dimmest memorial cavern;—shone as if he knew, come what might, that all was well; that if he shone his heart out and went dark, nothing would go wrong; while, for the present, everything depended on his shining his glorious best.

"Come along, Abdiel," said Clare; "we're going to see

what comes next. At the worst, you know what hunger is, doggie, and that a good deal of it can be borne pretty well—though I'm not fond of it any more than you, doggie! We'll not beg till we're downright forced, and we won't steal. When that's the next thing, we'll just sit down, wag our tails, and die.—There!"

He gave him the last piece of his meat, and they trudged on for some time without speaking.

The sun was very hot, for it was past noon an hour or two, when they came to a public-house, with a pump before it, and a trough. Clare grew very thirsty when he saw the pump, and imagined the rush of a thick sparkling curve from its spout. But its handle was locked with a chain, to keep men and women from having water instead of beer. He went with longing to the trough, but the water in it was so unclean that, thirsty as he was, he could not look on it even as a last resource. He walked into the house.

"Please, ma'am," he said to the woman at the bar, "would you allow me to pump myself a little water to drink?"

"You think I've got nothing to do but serve tramps with water!" she answered, throwing back her head till her nostrils were at right angles with the horizon.

"I'm not a tramp, ma'am," said Clare.

"Show me your money, then, for a pot of beer, like other honest folk."

"I'm afraid I told you wrong, ma'am," returned Clare. "I'm afraid I *am* a tramp after all; only *I*'m looking for work, and most tramps ain't, I fancy."

"They all *say* they are," answered the woman. "That's your story, and that's theirs!"

"I've got elevenpence, ma'am; and could, I dare say, buy a pot of beer, though I don't know the price of one; but I don't see where I'm going to get any more money, and what we have must serve Abdiel and me till we do."

"What right have *you* to a dog, when you ain't fit to pay your penny for a half-pint o' beer?"

"Don't be hard on the young 'un, mis'ess; he don't look a bad sort!" said a man who stood by with a pewter pot in his hand.

Clare wondered why he had his cord-trousers pulled up a few inches and tied under his knees with a string, which made little bags of them there. He had to think for a mile after they left the public-house before he discovered that it was to keep them from tightening on his knees when he stooped, and so incommoding him at his work.

"Thank you, sir," he said. "I'm not a bad sort. I didn't know it was any harm to ask for water. It ain't begging, is it, sir?"

"Not as I knows on," replied the man. "Here, take the lot!"

He offered Clare his nearly emptied pewter.

"No, thank you, sir," answered Clare. "I am thirsty —but not so thirsty as to take your drink from you. I can get on to the next pump. Perhaps that won't be chained up like a bull!"

"Here, mis'ess!" cried the man. "This is a mate as knows a neighbour when he sees him. I'll stand him a half-pint. There's yer money!"

Without a word the woman flung the man's penny in the till, and drew Clare a half-pint of porter. Clare took it eagerly, turned to the man, said, "I thank you, sir, and

wish your good health," and drained the pewter mug. He had never before tasted beer, or indeed any drink stronger than tea, and he did not like it. But he thanked his benefactor again, and went back to the trough.

"Dogs don't drink beer," he said to himself. "They know better!" and lifting Abdiel he held him over the trough. Abdiel was not so fastidious as his master, and lapped eagerly. Then they pursued their uncertain way.

Ready to do anything, he thought the shabbiness of his clothes would be a greater bar to indoor than to outdoor work, and applied therefore at every farm they came to. But he did not look so able as he was, and boys were not much wanted. He never pitied himself, and never entreated: to beg for work was beggary, and to beggary he would not descend until driven by approaching death. But now and then some tender-hearted woman, oftener one of ripe years, struck with his look—its endurance, perhaps, or its weariness mingled with hope—would perceive the necessity of the boy, and offer him the food he did not ask—nor like him the less that, never doubting what came to one was for both, he gave the first share of it to Abdiel.

CHAPTER XL.

MALY.

TRAVELLING on in vague hope, meeting with kindness enough to keep him alive, but getting no employment, sleeping in what shelter he could find, and never missing the shelter he could not find, for the

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CLARE AND ABDIEL AT THE LOCKED PUMP.

weather was exceptionally warm for the warm season, he came one day to a village where the strangest and hardest experience he ever encountered awaited him. What part of the country he was in, or what was the name of the village, he did not know. He seldom asked a question, seldom uttered word beyond a polite greeting, but kept trudging on and on, as if the goal of his expectation were ever drawing nigher. He felt no curiosity as to the names of the places he passed through. Why should the names of towns and villages strung on a road to nowhere in particular, interest him? He did, however, long afterward, come to know the name of this village, and its topographical relations: the place itself was branded on his brain.

He entered it in the glow of a hot noon, and had walked nearly through it without meeting any one, for it was the dinner-hour, and savoury odours filled the air, when a little girl came from a neat house, and ran farther down the street. He was very tired, very dusty, had eaten nothing that day, had begun to despair of work, and was wishing himself clear of the houses that he might throw himself down. But something in the look of the child made him quicken his weary step as he followed her. He overtook her, passed her, and saw her face. Heavens! it was Maly, grown wonderfully bigger! He turned and caught her up in his arms. She gave a screech of terror, and he set her down in keenest dismay. Finding that he was not going to run away with her, she did not run farther from him than to safe parleying distance.

"You bad boy!" she cried; "you're not to touch me! I will tell mamma!"

"Why, Maly! don't you know me?"

"No, I don't. You are a dirty boy!"

"But, Maly!—"

"My name is not Maly; it's Mary; and I don't know you."

"Have you forgotten Clare, Maly?—Clare that used to carry you about all day long?"

"Yes; I *have* forgotten you. You're a dirty, ragged beggar-boy! You're a bad boy! Boys with holes in their clothes are bad boys.—Nursie told me so, and she knows everything! She told me herself she knew everything!"

She gave another though milder scream: involuntarily, Clare had taken a step toward her, with his hand in his pocket, searching, as in the old days when she cried, for something to give her. But, alas, his pockets were now as empty as his stomach! there was *nothing* in them—not even a crumb saved from a scanty meal! While he was yet searching, the little child, his heart's love—if indeed it was she—stooped, gathered a handful of dust, and threw it at him. The big boy burst into tears. The child mocked him for a minute, and when Clare looked up again, drying his eyes with a rag, she was gone.

He felt no resentment; love, old memories, his strange gentleness, and pity for Maly and Maly's mother, saved him from it. The child was big and plump and rosy, but oh, how fallen from his little Maly! And, her child grown such, the mother was poor indeed, though up in the dome of the angels! If she did not know the change in her, it was the worse, for she could not help! Clare, like most of my readers, had not yet learned to trust God for everything. But he was true to Maly. Miserable over

her backsliding, he said to himself that evil counsellors were more to blame than she.

"Did she know me at all?" he pondered; "or has she forgot me altogether?"

He began to doubt whether the girl was really Maly, or one very like her. About half an hour after, he met a poor woman with a bundle on her bowed back, who gave him a piece of bread. When he had eaten that, he began to doubt whether he had met any little girl. He remembered that he had often come to himself, as he wandered along the road, to find he had been lost in fancies of old scenes or imaginary new ones; waked up, he did not at once realize himself a poor lad on the tramp for work he could not find: his conceptions were for a time stronger than the things around him. He was thereupon comforted with the hope that he had not in reality seen Maly, but had imagined the whole affair. How was it possible, though, that he should imagine such horrible things of his little sister? On the other hand, was it not more possible for a fainting brain to imagine such a misery, than for the live child to behave in such a fashion? Every day for many days he tormented himself with like reasonings; but by degrees the occurrence, whether fancy or fact, receded, and he grew more conscious of tramping, tramping along. He grew also more hopeless of getting work, but not more doubtful that everything was right. For he knew of nothing he had done to bring these things upon him.

His quiet content never left him. At the worst pinch of hunger and cold, he never fell into despair. I do not know what merit he had in this, for he was constituted more hopeful and placid than I ever knew another.

What he had merit in was, that not for a hungry boy's most powerful temptation, something to eat, would he even imagine himself doing what must not be done. He would not lead himself into temptation. Thus he pleased the Power—let me rather say, ten times more truly—the Father from whom he came.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE CARAVANS.

WITHIN a fortnight or so after the police had dismissed him, blowing him loose on the world like a dandelion-seed in the wind, Clare had an adventure which not only gave him pleasure, but led to work and food and interest in life.

Passing one day from a cross-country road into the highway, he came straight on the flank of a travelling menagerie. It was one of some size, and Clare saw at a glance that its horses were in fair condition. The front part of the little procession had already gone by, and an elephant was passing at the moment with a caravan—of feline creatures, as Clare afterwards learned, behind him. He drew it with absolute ease, but his head seemed to be dragged earthward by the weight of his trunk, as he plodded wearily along. A world of delight woke in the heart of the boy. He had read much about strange beasts, but had never seen one. His impulse was to run straight to the elephant, and tell him he loved him. For he was a live beast, and Clare loved every creature, common or strange, wild or tame, ordinary or wonderful.

But prudent thought followed, and he saw it better to hover around, in the hope of a chance of being useful. Oh, the treasures of wonder and knowledge on the other side of those thin walls of wood, so slowly drawn along the dusty highway! If but for a moment he might gaze on their living marvels! He had no money, but things came to him without money—not so plentifully as he could sometimes wish—but they came, and so might this! Employment among those animals would be well worth the long hungry waiting! This might be the very work he had been looking for without knowing it! It was for this, perhaps, he had been kept so long waiting —till the caravans should come along the road, and he be at the corner as they passed! He did not know how often a man may think thus and see it come to nothing —because there is better yet behind, for which more waiting is wanted.

At the end of the procession came a bear, shuffling along uncomfortably. It went to Clare's heart to see how far from comfortable the poor beast appeared. "What a life it would be," he thought, "to have all the creatures in all those caravans to make happy! That would be a life worth living!"

It was a worthy ambition—infinitely higher than that of boys who want to do something great, or clever, or strong. As to those who want to be rich—for their ambition I have an utter contempt. How gladly would I drive that meanness out of any boy's heart! To fall in with the work of the glad creator, and help him in it—that is the only ambition worth having. It may not look a grand thing to do it in a caravan, but it takes the mind of Christ to do it anywhere.

Behind the bear, closing the procession, came a stoutish, good-tempered-looking man, in a small spring-cart, drawn by a small pony: he was the earthly owner of that caged life, with all its gathered discomforts. Clare lifted his cap as he passed him—a politeness of which the man took no notice, because the boy was ragged. The moment he was past, Clare fell in behind as one of the procession. He was prudent enough, however, not to go so near as to look intrusive.

When he had followed thus for a mile or two, he saw, by signs patent to every wanderer, that they were coming near a town. Before reaching it, however, they arrived at a spot where the hedges receded from the road, leaving a little green sward on the sides of it, and there the long line came to a halt.

The menagerie had, the day before, been exhibited at a fair, and was now on its way to another, to be held the next day in the town they were approaching: they had made the halt in order to prepare their entrance. To let a part of their treasure be seen, was the best way to rouse desire after what was yet hidden: they were going, therefore, to take out an animal or two more to walk in parade. Clare sat down at a little distance, and wondered what was coming next.

Experience of tramps had made the men suspicious, and it may be they disliked having their proceedings watched by anybody; but, happily for Clare, it was the master himself who came up to him, not without something of menace in his bearing. The boy was never afraid, and hope started up full grown as the man approached. He rose and took off his cap—a very ready action with Clare, which sprung from pure politeness, and

from nothing either selfish or cringing. But the man put his own interpretation on the civility.

"What are you hanging about here for?" he said rudely.

Now Clare had a perfect right to answer, had he so pleased, that he was on the king's highway, where no one had a right to interfere with him. But he had the habit—he could not help it; it was natural to him—of thinking first of the other party's side of a question—a rare gift, which served him better than he knew. For the other may be in the right, and it is an ugly thing to interfere with any man's right; while a man's own rights are never so much good to him as when he waives them.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said; "I did not understand you wished to be alone. I never thought you would mind me. Will it be far enough if I go just out of sight, for I am very tired? It is pleasant, besides, to know there are friends near!"

The man recognized in Clare the modes and speech of a gentleman; and having, in the course of his wandering life, seen and known a good many strange things, he suspected under the rags a history. But he was not interested enough to stop and inquire into it.

"Never mind," he said, in altered tone; "I see you're after no mischief!" and with that walked away, leaving Clare to do as he pleased.

A few minutes more went by. Clare sat hungry and sleepy on the grass by the roadside. Before he knew, he was on his feet, startled by a terrible noise. The lion had opened his great jaws, and his brown leathery sides, working like a pair of bellows, had sent from his throat a huge blast, half roar, half howl. When Clare came to

himself he knew, though he had never heard it before, that the fearful sound was the voice of the lion. He did not know that all it meant was, that his majesty had thought of his dinner. It was not indeed much more than an audible gape. He stood for a moment, not at all terrified, but half expecting to see a huge yellow animal burst out of one of the caravans—he could not guess which: the roar was much too loud to indicate one rather than another. He sat down again, but was not any longer inclined to sleep. For a time, however, no second roar came from the ribs of the captive monarch.

CHAPTER XLII.

NIMROD.

THAT there had been a fair not far off will partly account for what follows. As Clare sat resting, which was all he could do, with sleep fled and food nowhere, a roar of a different kind invaded his ears. It came along the road this time, not from the caravans. He looked, and spied what would have brought the heart into the throat of many a grown man. Away on the road, in the direction whence the menagerie had come, he saw a cloud of dust and a confused struggle, presently resolved into two men, each at the end of a rope, and an animal between them attached to the ropes by a ring in his nose. It was a bull, in terrible excitement, bounding this way and that, dragging and driving the men—doing his best in fact to break away, now from the one of them, now from the other, and now from both at

once. It must have tortured him to pull those strong men by the cartilage of his nose, but he was in too great a rage to feel it much. Every other moment his hoofs would be higher than his head, and again hoofs and head and horns would be scraping the ground in a fruitless rush to send one of his tormentors into space beyond the ken of bulls. With swift divergence, like a scenting hound, he twisted and shot his huge body. The question between men and bull seemed one of endurance.

The pale-faced boy, though full of interest in the strife, yet having had no food that day, was not in sufficient spirits to run and meet the animal whirlwind, so as to watch closer its chances; but the struggle came at length near enough for him to follow almost every detail of it: he could see the bloody foam drip from the poor beast's nostrils. When about fifty yards away, the bull, by a sudden twist, wrenched the rope from the hands of one of the men. He fell on his back. The other dropped his rope and fled. The bull came scouring down the highway.

A second roar, as of muffled thunder, issued from the leathery flanks of the lion. The bull made a sudden stop, scoring up the ground with his hoofs. It seemed as if in full career he started back. Then down went his head, and like a black flash, its accompanying thunder a bellow of defiant contempt and wrath, he charged one of the caravans. He had taken the hungry lion's roar for a challenge to combat. It was nothing to the bull that the voice was that of an unknown monster; he was ready for whatever the monster might prove.

The men busy about the caravans and wagons, caught

sight of him coming, and in the first moment of terror at a beast to which they were not accustomed, bolted for refuge behind or upon them: they would sooner have encountered their tiger broke loose. The same moment, with astounding shock, the head of the bull went crack against the near hind-wheel of the caravan in whose shafts stood the elephant, patiently waiting orders. The bull had not caught sight of the elephant, or he would doubtless have "gone for" him, not the caravan. His ear, finer than Clare's, must have distinguished whence the roar proceeded: in that caravan, sure enough, was the lion, with the rest of the great cats. He answered the blow of the bull's head with a roar thunderously different from his late sleepy leonine sigh. It roused every creature in the menagerie. From the greatest to the smallest each took up its cry. Out burst a tornado of terrific sound, filling with horror the quiet noontide. The roaring and yelling of lion, tiger, and leopard, the laughter of hyena, the howling of jackal, and the snarling of bear, mingled in hideous dissonance with the cries of monkeys and parrots; while certain strange gurgles made Clare's heart, lover of animals though he was, quiver, and his blood creep. The same instant, however, he woke to the sense that he might do something: he ran to the caravans.

By this time the men, master and all, fully roused to the far worse that might follow the attack of the bull, had caught up what weapons were at hand, and rushed to repel the animal. For more than one or two of them it might have proved a fatal encounter, but that the enraged beast had entangled his horns in the spokes and rim of the wheel. In terror of what might be approaching him from behind, he was struggling wildly to extricate them.

Peril upon peril! What if in the contortions of his mighty muscles he pulled off the wheel, and the carriage toppled over, every cage in it so twisted and wrenched that the bearings of its iron bars gave way! The results were too terrible to ponder! This way and that, and every way at once, he was writhing and pushing and prising and dragging. The elephant turned the shafts slowly round to see what was the matter behind. If the bull and the elephant yoked to the caravan came to loggerheads, ruin was inevitable. The master thought whether he had not better loose the elephant while the bull was yet entangled by the horns. With one blow of his trunk he would break the ruffian's back and end the affray! It were good even, if one knew how, to loose the wicked-looking horns: the brute's struggles to free them were more dangerous far than could be the horns themselves!

While he hesitated, Clare came running up, with Abdiel at his heels ready as any hornet to fly at bull or elephant, let his master only speak the word. But the moment Clare saw how the bull's horns were mixed up with the spokes and fellies of the wheel, a glad suspicion flashed across him: that was old Nimrod's way! could it be Nimrod himself? If it were, the trouble was as good as over! The suspicion became a certainty the instant it woke. But never could Clare altogether forgive himself for not at first sight recognizing his old friend. I believe myself that hunger was to blame, and not Clare.

The men stood about the animal, uncertain what to do, as he struggled with his horns, and heaved and tore at the wheel to get them out of it, the roars and howls and inarticulate curses going on all the time. The elephant

must have been tired, to stand so and do nothing! For a moment Clare could not get near enough. He was afraid to call him while the bull could not see him: Nimrod might but struggle the more, in order to get to him!

Up rushed a fellow, white with rage and running, bang into the middle of the spectators, and shook the knot of them asunder. It was one of the two men from whom Nimrod had broken. He had a pitchfork in his hands, which he proceeded to level. Clare flung his weight against him, threw up his fork, shoved him aside, and got close to the maddened animal. It was his past come again! How often had he not interfered to protect Nimrod—and his would-be masters also! With instinctive, unconscious authority, he held up his hand to the little crowd.

"Leave him alone," he cried. "I know him; I can manage him! Please do not interfere. He is an old friend of mine."

They saw that the bull was already still: he had recognized the boy's voice! They kept his furious attendant back, and looked on in anxious hope while Clare went up to the animal.

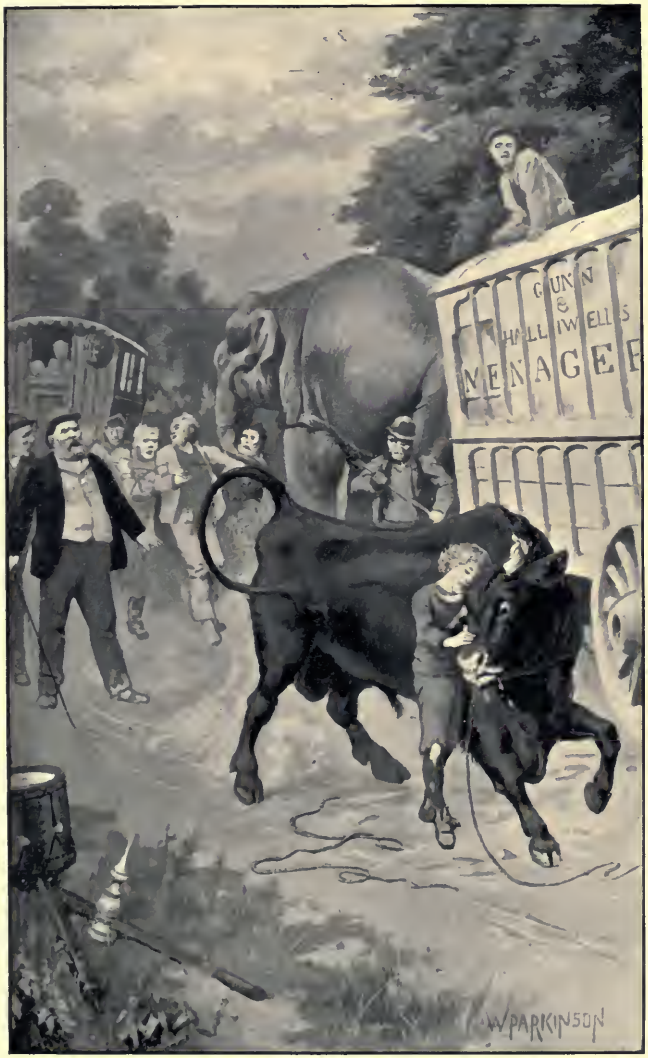
"Nimrod!" he whispered, laying a hand on one of the creature's horns, and his cheek against his neck.

Nimrod stood like a bull in bronze.

"I'm going to get your horns out, Nimrod," murmured Clare, and laid hold of the other with a firm grasp. "You must let me do as I like, you know, Nimrod!"

His voice evidently soothed the bull.

By the horns Clare turned his head now one way, now another, Nimrod not once resisting push or pull. In a moment more he would have them clear, for one of them



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CLARE PROCEEDS TO UNTIE THE ROPES FROM THE RING IN THE BULL'S NOSE

was already free. Holding on to the latter, Clare turned to the bystanders.

"You mustn't touch him," he said, "or I won't answer for him. And you mustn't let either of those men there" —for the second of Nimrod's attendants had by this time come up—"interfere with him or me. They let him go because they couldn't manage him. He can't bear them; and if he were to break loose from them again, it might be quite another affair! Then he might distrust me!"

The menagerie men turned, and looking saw that the man with the pitchfork had revenge in his heart. They gave him to understand that he must mind what he was about, or it would be the worse for him. The man scowled and said nothing.

Clare gently released the other horn, but kept his hold of the first, moving the creature's head by it, this way and that. A moment more and he turned his face to the company, which had scattered a little. When the inflamed eyes of Nimrod came into view, they scattered wider. Clare still made the bull feel his hand on his horn, and kept speaking to him gently and lovingly. Nimrod eyed his enemies, for such plainly he counted them, as if he wished he were a lion that he might eat as well as kill them. At the same time he seemed to regard them with triumph, saying in his big heart, "Ha! ha! you did not know what a friend I had! Here he is, come in the nick of time! I thought he would!" Clare proceeded to untie the ropes from the ring in his nose. The man with the pitchfork interfered.

"That wonnot do!" he said, and laid his hand on Clare's arm. "Would you send him ramping over the country, and never a hold to have on him?"

"It wasn't much good when you had a hold on him—was it now?" returned the boy. "Where do you want to take him?"

"That's my business," answered the man sulkily.

"I fancy you'll find it's mine!" returned Clare. "But there he is! Take him."

The man hesitated.

"Then leave me to manage him," said Clare.

A murmur of approbation arose. The caravan people felt he knew what he was saying. They believed he had power with the bull.

While yet he was untying the first of the ropes from the animal's bleeding nostrils, Clare's fingers all at once refused further obedience, his eyes grew dim, and he fell senseless at the bull's feet.

"Don't tell Nimrod!" he murmured as he fell.

"Oh, that explains it!" cried the man with the pitchfork to his mate. "He knows the cursed brute!" For Clare had hitherto spoken his name to the bull as if it were a secret between them.

Neither had the sense to perceive that the explanation lay in the bull's knowing Clare, not in Clare's knowing the bull. They made haste to lay hold of the ropes. Nimrod stood motionless, looking down on his friend, now and then snuffing at the pale face, which the thoroughbred mongrel, Abdiel, kept licking continuously. Noses of bull and dog met without offence on the loved human countenance. But had the men let the bull feel the ropes, that moment he would have been raging like a demon.

The men of the caravan, admiring both Clare's influence over the animal and his management of him, grateful also for what he had done for them, hastened to his help.

When they had got him to take a little brandy, he sat up with a wan smile, but presently fell sideways on his elbow, and so to the ground again.

"It's nothing," he murmured; "it's only I'm rather hungry."

"Poor boy!" said a woman, who had followed her brandy from the house-caravan, afraid it might disappear in occult directions, "when did you have your last feed?"

She stood looking down on the white face, almost between the fore-feet of the bull.

"I had a piece of bread yesterday afternoon, ma'am," faltered Clare, trying to look up at her.

"Bless my soul!" she cried, "who's been a murderin' of you, child?"

She thought he was in company with the two men, and they had been ill-treating him.

"I can't get any work, ma'am, so I don't want much to eat. Now I think of it, I believe it was the gladness of seeing an old friend again, and not the hunger, that made me feel so queer all at once."

"Where's your friend?" she asked, looking round the assembly.

"There he is!" answered Clare, putting up his hand, and stroking the big nose that was right over his face.

"Couldn't you rise now?" said the woman, after a moment's silent regard of him.

"I'll try, ma'am; I don't feel quite sure."

"I want you to come into the house, and have a good square meal."

"If you would be so kind, ma'am, as let me have a bit of bread here! Nimrod would not like me to leave him.

He loves me, ma'am, and if I went away, he might be troublesome. Those men will never do anything with him: he doesn't like them! They've been rough to him, I don't doubt. Not that I wonder at that, for he is a terrible beast to most people. They used to say he never was good with anybody but me. I suppose he knew I cared for him!"

His eyes closed again. The woman made haste to get him something. In a few minutes she returned with a basin of broth. He took it eagerly, but with a look of gratitude that went to her heart. Before he tasted it, however, he set it on the ground, broke in half the great piece of bread she had brought with it, and gave the larger part to his dog. Then he ate the other with his broth, and felt better than for many a day. Some of the men said he could not be very hungry to give a cur like that so much of his dinner; but the evil thought did not enter the mind of the woman.

"You'd better be taking your beast away," said the woman, who by this time understood the affair, to the two men.

They were silent, evidently disinclined for such another tussle.

"You'd better be going," she said again. "If anything should happen with that animal of yours, and one of ours was to get loose, the devil would be to pay, and who'd do it?"

"They'd better wait for me, ma'am," said Clare, rising. "I'm just ready!—They won't tell me where they want to take him, but it's all one, so long as I'm with him. He's my friend!—Ain't you, Nimrod? We'll go together —won't we, Nimrod?"

While he spoke, he undid the ropes from the ring in the bull's nose. Gathering them up, he handed them politely to one of the men, and the next moment sprang upon the bull's back, just behind his shoulders, and leaning forward, stroked his horns and neck.

"Give me up the dog, please," he said.

The owner of the menagerie himself did as Clare requested. All stood and stared, half expecting to see him flung from the creature's back, and trampled under his hoofs. Even Nimrod, however, would not easily have unseated Clare, who could ride anything he had ever tried, and had tried everything strong enough to carry him, from a pig upward. But Nimrod was far from wishing to unseat his friend, who with hands and legs began to send him toward the road.

"Are you going that way?" he asked, pointing. The men answered him with a nod, sulky still.

"Don't go with those men," said the woman, coming up to the side of the bull, and speaking in a low voice. "I don't like the look of them."

"Nimrod will be on my side, ma'am," answered Clare. "They would never have got him home without me. They don't understand their fellow-creatures."

"I'm afraid you understand your fellow-creatures, as you call them, better than you do your own kind!"

"I think they are my own kind, ma'am. That is how they know me, and do what I want them to do."

"Stay with us," said the woman coaxingly, still speaking low. "You'll have plenty of your fellow-creatures about you then!"

"Thank you, ma'am, a thousand times!" answered Clare, his face beaming; "but I couldn't leave poor

Nimrod to do those men a mischief, and be killed for it!"

"You'd have plenty to eat and drink, and som'at for your pocket!" persisted the woman.

"I know I should have everything I wanted!" answered Clare, "and I'm very thankful to you, ma'am. But you see there's always something, somehow, that's got to be done before the other thing!"

Here the master came up. He had himself been thinking the boy would be a great acquisition, and guessed what his wife was about; but he was afraid she might promise too much for services that ought to be had cheap. Few scruple to take advantage of the misfortune of another to get his service cheap. It is the economy of hell.

"I sha'n't feel safe till that bull of yours is a mile off!" he said.

"Come along, Nimrod!" answered Clare, always ready with the responsive deed.

Away went Nimrod, gentle as a lamb.

CHAPTER XLIII.

ACROSS COUNTRY.

THE two men came after at their ease. No sooner was Nimrod on the road, however, than he began to quicken his pace. He quickened it fast, and within a minute or so was trotting swiftly along. The men ran panting and shouting behind. The more they shouted, the faster Nimrod went. Ere long he was out of their

sight, though Clare could hear them cursing and calling for a time.

He had endeavoured to stop Nimrod, but the bull seemed to have made up his mind that he had obeyed enough for one day. He did not heed a word Clare said to him, but kept on and on at a swinging trot. Clare would have jumped off had he been sure the proceeding would stop him; but, now that he would not obey him, he feared lest, in doing so, he might let him loose on the country, when there was no saying what mischief he might not work. On the other hand, he felt sure that he could restrain him from violence, though he might not prevent his frolicking. He must therefore keep his seat.

For a few miles Nimrod was content with the highway, now trotting beautifully, now breaking into a canter. But all at once he turned at right angles in the middle of the road, cleared the skirting fence like a hunter, and took a bee-line across the fields. Compelled sometimes to abandon it, he showed great judgment in choosing the place at which to get out of the enclosure, or cross the natural obstruction. On and on he went, over hedge after hedge, through field after field, until Clare began to wonder where all the people in the world had got to. Then a strange feeling gradually came over him. Surely at some time or other he had seen the meadow he was crossing! Was he asleep, and dreaming the jolly ride he was having on Nimrod's back? What a strong creature Nimrod was! Would he never be tired? How oddly he felt! Were his senses going from him? It was like the strangest mixture of a bad dream and a good!

There seemed at length no further room for doubt or mistake. Everything was in its place! It was plain why Nimrod was so obstinate! The dear old fellow was carrying him back to where they had been together so many happy days! They were nigh Mr. Goodenough's farm, and making straight for it! How strange it was! he had felt himself a measureless distance from it! But in his wandering he had taken many turns he did not heed, and Nimrod had come the shortest way. Delight filled his heart at the thought of seeing once more the places where his father and mother seemed yet to live. But instantly came the thought of Maly, and drowned the other thought in bitterness. Then he felt how worthless place is, when those who made it dear are gone. Father and mother are home—not the house we were born in!

They were soon upon the farm where once he had abundance of labour, abundance to eat, and abundance of lowly friendship. Nimrod was making for his old stable. He was weary now, and breathing heavily, though not at all spent. Was he dreaming of a golden age, in which Clare should be ever at his beck and call?

Clare had little inclination to encounter any of the people of the farm. He would indeed have been glad, from a little way off, to get a sight of his once friend and master, the farmer himself; and very gladly would he have gone into the stable in the hope of a greeting from old Jonathan; but he would not willingly meet "the mistress!" Nimrod should take him to his old stall; there he would tie him up, and flee from the place! The evening was now come, and in the dusk he would escape unseen.

When they reached Nimrod's door, they found it closed; and Clare, stiff enough by this time, slipped off to open it. Nimrod began to paw the stones, and blow angry puffs from his wounded nose. When Clare got the door open, he saw, to his confusion, a vague dark bulk, another bull, in Nimrod's stall! The roar that simultaneously burst from each was ferocious, and down went Nimrod's head to charge. It was a terrible moment for Clare: the new bull was fast by the head, and, unable to turn it to his adversary, would be gored to death almost in a moment! He could not let Nimrod be guilty of such unfairness! And the mistress would think he had brought him back for the very purpose! He all but jumped on the horns of his friend, making him yield just ground enough for the shutting of the door. He knew well, however, that not three such doors in one would keep Nimrod from an enemy. With his back to it he stood facing him and talking to him, and all the while they heard the bull inside struggling to get free. He stood between two horned rages, only a chain and a plank betwixt him and the one at his back, with which he had no influence. A coward would have escaped, and left the two bullies to settle between them which had the better right to the stall—not without blood, almost as certainly not without loss of life, perhaps human as well as bovine. But Clare was made of other stuff.

Before he could get Nimrod away, the bellowing brought out the farmer. All his men had gone to the village; only himself and his wife were at home.

"What's got the brute?" he cried on the threshold, but instantly began to run, for he saw through the gathering darkness a darker shape he knew, roaring and pawing at

the door of his old quarters, and a boy standing between him and it, with marvellous courage in mortal danger. He understood at once that Nimrod had broken loose and come back. But when he came near enough to recognize Clare, astonishment, and something more sacred than astonishment, held him dumb. Ever since the unjust blow that sent the boy from him, his heart had been aware of a little hollow of remorse in it. Now all his former relations with him while his adoptive father yet lived, came back upon him. He remembered him dressed like the little gentleman he always was—and there he stood, the same gentle fearless creature, in absolute rags! If his wife saw him! The farmer had no fear of Nimrod in his worst rages, but he feared his wife in her gentlest moods. Happily for both, a critical moment in the cooking of the supper had arrived.

"Clare!" he stammered.

"Yes, sir," returned Clare, and laid hold of Nimrod's horn. The animal yielded, and turned away with him.

The farmer came nearer, and put his arm round the boy's neck. The boy rubbed his cheek against the arm.

"I'm sorry I struck you, Clare!" faltered the big man.

"Oh, never mind, sir! That was long ago!" answered the boy.

"Tell me how you've been getting on."

"Pretty well, sir! But I want to tell you first how it is I'm here with Nimrod. Only it would be better to put him somewhere before I begin."

"It would," agreed the farmer; and between them, with the enticements of a pail of water and some fresh-cut grass, they got him into a shed, where they hoped he

would forget the proximity of the usurper, and, with the soothing help of his supper, go to sleep.

Then Clare told his story. Mr Goodenough afterward asseverated that, if he had not known him for a boy that would not lie, he would not have believed the half of it.

"Come, Abdiel!" said Clare, the moment he ended—and would have started at once.

"Won't you have something after your long ride?" said the farmer.

Clare looked down at his clothes, and laughed. The farmer knew what he meant, and did not ask him into the house.

"When had you anything to eat?" he inquired.

"I shall do very well till to-morrow," answered Clare.

"Then if you will go, I'm glad of the opportunity of paying you the wages I owed you," said the farmer, putting his hand in his pocket.

"You gave me my food! That was all I was worth!" protested Clare.

"You were worth more than that! I knew the difference when I had another boy in your place! I wish I had you again!—But it wouldn't do, you know! it wouldn't do!" he added hastily.

With that he succeeded in pulling a sovereign from the depth of a trowser-pocket, and held it out to Clare. It was neither large wages nor a greatly generous gift, but it seemed to the boy wealth enormous. He could not help holding out his hand, but he was ashamed to open it. What the giver regarded as a debt, the receiver regarded as a gift. He stood with his hand out but clenched. There was a combat inside him.

"It's too much!" he protested, looking at the sovereign

almost with fear. "I never had so much money in my life!"

"You earned it well," said the farmer magnanimously.

The moral cramp forsook his hand. He took the money with a hearty "Thank you, sir." As he put it in his pocket, he felt its corners carefully, lest there should be a hole. But his pockets had not had half the wear of the clothes they inhabited.

"Where are you going?" asked the farmer.

Clare mentioned the small town in whose neighbourhood he had left the caravans, and said he thought the people of the menagerie would like him to help them with the beasts. The farmer shook his head.

"It's not a respectable occupation!" he remarked.

Clare did not understand him.

"Do they cheat?" he asked.

"No; I don't suppose they cheat worse than anybody else. But it ain't respectable."

Had he known a little more, Clare might have asserted that the men about the menagerie were at least as respectable as almost any farmer with a horse to sell. But he knew next to nothing of wickedness, whence many a man whose skull he had brains enough to fill three times, regarded him as a simpleton.

Clare thought everything honest honourable. When people said otherwise, he did not understand, and continued to act according as he understood. A thousand dishonourable things are done, and largely approved, which Clare would not have touched with one of his fingers: he could see nothing more dishonourable in having to do with wild beasts than in having to do with tame ones. If any boy wants to know the sort of thing I

count in that thousand, I answer him—"The next thing you are asked to do, or are inclined to do—if you have any doubt about it, DON'T DO IT." That is the way to know the honourable thing from the dishonourable.

Clare made no attempt to argue the question with the farmer. He inquired of him the nearest way to the town, and went—the quicker that he heard the voice of Mrs. Goodenough, calling her husband to supper.

CHAPTER XLIV.

A THIRD MOTHER.

WHO ever had a sovereign for the first time in his life, and did not feel rich? Clare trudged along merrily, and Abdiel shared his joy. They had to sleep out of doors nevertheless; for by this time Clare knew that a boy, especially a boy in rags, must mind whom he asks to change a sovereign. In the lee of a hay-mow, on a little loose hay, they slept, Abdiel in Clare's bosom, and slept well.

There was not much temptation to lie long after waking, and the companions were early on their way. It was yet morning when they came to the public house where Clare had his first and last half-pint of beer. The landlady stood at the newly opened door, with her fists in her sides, looking out on the fresh world, lost in some such thought as was possible to her. Clare pulled off his cap, and bade her good morning as he passed. Perhaps she knew she did not deserve politeness; anyhow she took Clare's for impudence, and came swooping upon

him. He stopped and waited her approach, perplexed as to the cause of it; and was so unprepared for the box on the ear she dealt him, that it almost threw him down. Her ankle was instantly in Abdiel's sharp teeth. She gave a frightful screech, and Clare, coming to himself, though still stupid from her blow and his own surprise, called off the dog. The woman limped raging to the house, and Clare thought it prudent to go his way. He talked severely to Abdiel as they went; but though the dog could understand much, I doubt if he understood that lecture. For Abdiel was one of the few, even among dogs, with whom the defence of master or friend is an inborn, instinctive duty; and strong temptation even has but a poor chance against the sense of duty in a dog.

It was night when they entered the town. They were already a weary pair when the far sounds of the brass band of the menagerie, mostly made up of attendants on the animals, first entered their ears. The marketing was over; the band was issuing its last invitation to the merry-makers to walk up and see strange sights; its notes were just dying to their close, when the wayfarers arrived at the foot of the steps leading to the platform where the musicians stood. Clare ascended, and Abdiel crept after him.

At a table in a small curtained recess on the platform, sat the mistress to receive the money of those that entered. Clare laid his sovereign before her. She took it up without looking at him, but at it she looked doubtfully. She threw it on her table. It would not ring. She bit it with her white teeth, and looked at it again; then at length gave a glance at the person who offered it. Her dull lamp flickered in the puffs of the night-wind.

and she did not recognize Clare. She saw but a white-faced, ragged boy, and threw him back his sovereign.

"Won't pass," she said with decision, not unmingled with contempt. She sat at the receipt of money, where too many men and women cease to be ladies and gentlemen.

Clare did not at first understand. He stood motionless and, for the second time that day, bewildered. How could money be no money?

"'Ain't you got sixpence?" she asked.

"No, ma'am," answered Clare. "I haven't had sixpence for many a day."

The moment he spoke, the woman looked him sharply in the face, and knew him.

"Drat my stupid eyes!" she said fervently. "That I shouldn't ha' known you! Walk in, walk in. Go where you please, and do as you please. You're right welcome. —Where did you get that sov.?"

"From Farmer Goodenough."

"Good enough, I hope, not to take advantage of an innocent prince! Was it for taking home the bull?"

"No, ma'am. I didn't take the bull home. The bull took me to the old home where we used to be together. He didn't want a new one!"

"Well, never mind now. Give me the sovereign. I'll talk to you by and by. Go in, or the show 'ill be over. Look after your dog, though. We don't like dogs. He mustn't go in."

"I'll send him right outside, if you wish it, ma'am."

"I do.—But will he stay out?"

"He will, ma'am."

Clare took up Abdiel, and setting him at the top of

the steps, told him to go down and wait. Abdiel went hopping down, like a dirty little white cataract out on its own hook, turned in under the steps, and deposited himself there until his master should call him.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE MENAGERIE.

A STRANGE smell was in Clare's nostrils, and as he went down the steps inside, it grew stronger. He did not dislike it; but it set him thinking why it should so differ from that of domestic animals. He was presently in the midst of a vision attractive to all boys, but which few had ever looked upon with such intelligent wonder as he; for Clare had read and re-read every book about animals upon which he could lay his hands. He had a great power too of remembering what he read; for he never let a description glide away over the outside of his eyes, but always put it inside his thinking place. What with pictures and descriptions, he seemed to know, as he looked around him, every animal on which his eyes fell.

The area was by no means crowded. There had been many visitors during the day, but now it was late. He could see into all the cages that formed the sides of the enclosure. Many of the creatures seemed restless, few sleepy: night was the waking time for most of them. How should a great roaming, hunting cat go to sleep in a little cube of darkness! "Oh," thought Clare, "how gladly would I help them to bear it! I could bear it myself with somebody near to be kind to me!"

He had begun to feel that the quiet happiness to which he was once so accustomed that he did not think much about it, was his because it was *given* him. He had begun to see that it did not come to him of itself, but from the love of his father and mother. He had yet to learn that it was given to them to give to him by the Father of fathers and mothers. But he was beginning to prize every least kindness shown him. This re-acted on his desire to make the happiness greater and the pain less everywhere about him. He had little chance of doing much for people, he thought; but he knew how to do things for some animals, and perhaps it was only necessary to know others to be able to do something for them too!

Thoughts like these passing through his mind, and his gaze wandering hither and thither over the shifting shapes, his eyes rested on the tenant of one of the cages, and his heart immediately grew very sore, for he seemed unable to lift his head. He was a big animal, alone in his prison, of a blackish colour, and awkward appearance. He went nearer, and found he had a big ring in his nose like Nimrod. But to the ring was fastened a strong chain, and the chain was bolted down to the floor of the cage, which was of iron covered with boards, in their turn covered with a thick sheet of lead. The chain was so short that it held the poor creature's head within about a foot of the floor. He could not lift it higher, or move it farther on either side; but he kept moving it constantly. It was a pitiful sight, and Clare went nearer still, drawn far more by compassion, and indeed sympathy, than by curiosity. He was a terrible brute, a big grizzly bear, ugly to repulsiveness. The snarling scorn, the sneering,

lip-writhing hate of the demoniacal grin with which he received the boy, was hideous; the rattling, pebble-jarring growl that came from his devilish throat was loathing embodied. What if spirits worse than their own get into some of the creatures by virtue of the likeness between them! One day will be written, perhaps, a history of animals very different from any attempted by mere master in zoology. Clare spoke to the beast again and again, but was unvaryingly answered by the same odious snarl, curling his lip under his nose-ring. It seemed to express the imagined delight of tearing him limb from limb.

"Poor fellow!" said Clare, "how can he be good-tempered with that torturing ring and chain! His unalterable position must make his every bone ache!"

But had his nose been set free, such a raging-bear-struggle to get at the nearest of his fellow-prisoners would have ensued, as must soon have torn to shreds the partition between them. For he was a beast-bedlamite, an animal volcano, a furnace of death, an incarnate paroxysm of wrath. The inspiration of the creature, so far as one could see, was pure hate.

The boy turned aside with quivering heart—sore for the grizzly's nose, and sorer still for the grizzly himself that he was so unfriendly.

Right opposite, a creature of a far differing disposition seemed casting defiance to all the ills of life. As he turned with a sad despair from the grizzly, Clare caught sight of his pranks, and hastened across the area. The creature kept bounding from side to side of his cage, agile and frolicsome as a kitten. But the light was poor, and Clare could not even conjecture to which of the cat-

kinds he belonged. When he came near his cage, he saw that he was yellowish like a lion, and thought perhaps he might be a young lion. He had no mane. Clare judged him four feet in length without the tail—or perhaps four and a half. A little way off was the real lion—a young one, it is true, but quite grown, with a thin ruffy mane, and lordly carriage and gaze. It was he whose roar had challenged Nimrod, giving the topmost flutter to the flame of his wrath. But Clare was so taken with the frolicsome creature before him, that he gave but a glance at the grand one as he walked up and down his prison, and turned again to the merry one disporting himself alone, who seemed to find the pleasure of life in great games with companions no one saw but himself. For minutes he stood regarding the gladness of God's creature. A wild thing of the woods and plains, he made the most of the bars and floor and roof of his cage. No one careless of liberty could make such bounds as those; yet he was joyous in closest imprisonment! His liberty gone, his freedom contracted to a few cubic feet, his space diminished almost to the mould of his body, the great wild philosopher created his own liberty, made it out of his own love of it. Like a live, erratic shuttle he went to and fro, unweaving, unravelling, unwinding, drawing out the knot of confinement, flinging out, radiating and spreading and breathing out space in all directions, by multitudinous motion of disentanglement! Space gone from him, space in the abstract should replace it! He would not be slave to condition! Space unconditioned should be his! For him liberty should not lie in space, but in his own soul. Room should be but the poor outside symbol of his inward freedom! He would spin out,

he would weave, he would unroll essential liberty into spiritual space! His mind to him a kingdom was. Not a grumble, not a snarl! He left discontent to men, to build their own prisons withal. A proud man with everything he longs for, if such a man there be, is but a slave; this creature of the glad creator was and would be free, because he was a free soul. Prison bars could not touch that by whose virtue he was and would be free!

The germ of this thinking was in the mind of Clare while he stood and gazed; and as he told me the story, its ripeness came thus, or nearly thus, from his lips; for he had thought much in lonely places.

As he gazed and sympathized, there awoke within him that strange consciousness which my reader must, at one time or another, have known—of being on the point of remembering something. It was not a memory that came, but a memory of a memory—the shadow of a memory gone, but trying to come out from behind a veil—a sense of having once known something. It gave another aspect to the blessed creature before him. The creature and himself seemed for a moment to belong together to another time. Could he have seen such an animal before? He did not think so! He could never have visited a menagerie and forgotten it! If he had known such a creature, his after-reading would have recalled it, he would know it now! He could tell the lion and the tiger and the leopard, although he seemed to know he had never seen one of them; he could not tell this animal, and yet—and yet!—what was it? The feeling itself lasted scarce an instant, and went no farther. No memory came to him. The foiled expectation was all he had. The very reasoning about it helped to

obliterate the shape of the feeling itself. He could not even recall how the thing had felt; he could only remember it had been there. It was now but the shadow of the shadow of a dream—a yet vaguer memory than that thinnest of presences which had at the first tantalized him. We remember what we cannot recall.

Perhaps the rousing of the odd, fantastic feeling had been favoured by the slumber beginning to encroach on body and brain. While he stood looking at the one creature, all the wonderful creatures began to get mixed up together, and he thought it better to go and search for some field of sleep, where he might mow a little for his use. He said good-night to the great, gentle, jubilant cat, turned from him unwillingly, and went up the steps. Almost every spectator was gone. At the top of them he turned for a last look, but could distinguish nothing except the dim form of the young lion, as he thought him, still gamboling in the presence of his maker.

He thought to see the mistress of the menagerie, but she was no longer in her curtained box. He went out on the deserted platform, and down the steps. Abdiel was already at the foot when he reached it, wagging his weary little tail.

They set out to look for a shelter. Their search, however, was so much in vain, that at last they returned and lay down under one of the wagons, on the hard ground of the public square. Sleeping so often out of doors, he had never yet taken cold.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE ANGEL OF THE WILD BEASTS.

WHEN Clare looked up he saw nothing between him and the sky. They had dragged the caravan from above him, and he had not moved. Abdiel indeed waked at the first pull, but had lain as still as a mouse—ready to rouse his master, but not an instant before it should be necessary.

Clare saw the sky, but he saw something else over him, better than the sky—the face of Mrs. Halliwell, the mistress of the menagerie. In it, as she stood looking down on him, was compassion, mingled with self-reproach.

Clare jumped up, saying, "Good morning, ma'am!" He was yet but half awake, and staggered with sleep.

"My poor boy!" answered the woman, "I sent you to sleep on the cold earth, with a sovereign of your own in my pocket! I made sure you would come and ask me for it! You're too innocent to go about the world without a mother!"

She turned her face away.

"But, ma'am, you know I couldn't have offered it to anybody," said Clare. "It wasn't good!—Besides, before I knew that," he went on, finding she did not reply, "there was nobody but you I dared offer it to: they would have said I stole it—because I'm so shabby!" he added, looking down at his rags. "But it ain't in the clothes, ma'am—is it?"

Getting the better of her feelings for a moment, she turned her face and said,—

"It was all my fault! The sov. is a good one. It's only cracked! I ought to have known, and changed it for you. Then all would have been well!"

"I don't think it would have made any difference, ma'am. We would rather sleep on the ground than in a bed that mightn't be clean—wouldn't we, Abby?" The dog gave a short little bark, as he always did when his master addressed him by his name.—"But I'm so glad!" Clare went on. "I was sure Mr. Goodenough thought the sovereign all right when he gave it me!—Were you ever disappointed in a sovereign, ma'am?"

"I been oftener disappointed in them as owed 'em!" she answered. "But to think o' me snug in bed, an' you sleepin' out i' the dark night! I can't abide the thought on it!"

"Don't let it trouble you, ma'am; we're used to it. Ain't we, Abby?"

"Then you oughtn't to be! and, please God, you shall be no more! But come along and have your breakfast. We don't start till the last."

"Please, ma'am, may Abdiel come too?"

"In course! 'Love me, love my dog!' Ain't that right?"

"Yes, ma'am; but some people like dogs worse than boys."

"A good deal depends on the dog. When folk brings up their dogs as bad as they do their childern, I want neither about me. But your dog's a well-behaved dog. Still, he must learn not to come in sight o' the animals."

"He will learn, ma'am!—Abdiel, lie down, and don't come till I call you."

At the word, the dog dropped, and lay.

The house-caravan stood a little way off, drawn aside

when they began to break up. They ascended its steps behind, and entered an enchanting little room. It had muslin curtains to the windows, and a small stove in which you could see the bright red coals. On the stove stood a coffee-pot and a covered dish. How nice and warm the place felt, after the nearly shelterless night!

The breakfast-things were still on the table. Mr. Halliwell had had his breakfast, but Mrs. Halliwell would not eat until she had found the boy. She had been unhappy about him all the night. Her husband had assured her the sovereign was a good one, and the boy had told her he had no money but the sovereign! She little knew how seldom he fared better than that same night! When he got among hay or straw, that was luxury.

They sat down to breakfast, and the good woman was very soon confirmed in the notion that the boy was a gentleman.

"Call your dog now," she said, "an' let's see if he'll come!"

"May I whistle, ma'am?"

"Why not!—But will he hear you?"

"He has very sharp ears, ma'am."

Clare gave a low, peculiar whistle. In a second or two, they heard an anxious little whine at the door. Clare made haste to open it. There stood Abdiel, with the words in his eyes, as plain almost as if he spoke them—"Did you call, sir?" The woman caught him and held him to her bosom.

"You blessed little thing!" she said.

And surely if there be a blessing to be had, it is for them that obey.

Clare heard and felt the horses put-to, but the hostess

of this Scythian house did not rise, and he too went on with his breakfast. When they were in motion, it was not so easy to eat nicely, but he managed very well. By the time he had done, they had left the town behind them. He wanted to help Mrs. Halliwell with the breakfast-things, but whether she feared he would break some of them, or did not think it masculine work, she would not allow him.

Nothing had been said about his going with them; she had taken that for granted. Clare began to think perhaps he ought to take his leave: there was nothing for him to do! He and Abdiel ought at least to get out and walk, instead of burdening the poor horses with their weight, when they were so well rested, and had had such a good breakfast! But when he said so to Mrs. Halliwell, she told him she must have a little talk with him first, and formally proposed that he should enter their service, and do whatever he was fit for in the menagerie.

"You're not frightened of the beasts, are you?" she said.

"Oh no, ma'am; I love them!" answered Clare. "But are you sure Mr. Halliwell thinks I could be of use?"

"Don't you think yourself you could?" asked Mrs. Halliwell.

"I know I could, ma'am; but I should not like him to take me just because he was sorry for me!"

"You innocent! People are in no such hurry to help their neighbours. My husband's as good a man as any going; but it don't mean he would take a boy because nobody else would have him. A fool of a woman might—I won't say; but not a man I ever knew. No, no! He saw the way you managed that bull!—a far

more unreasonable creature than any we have to do with!"

"Ah! you don't know Nimrod, ma'am!"

"I don't, an' I don't want to!—Such wild animals ought to be put in caravans!" she added, with a laugh.

"Well, ma'am," said Clare, "if you and Mr. Halliwell are of one mind, nothing would please me so much as to serve you and the beasts. But I should like to be sure about it, for where husband and wife are not of one mind—well, it is uncomfortable!"

Thereupon he told her how he had stood with the farmer and his wife; and from that she led him on through his whole story—not unaccompanied with tears on the part of his deliverer, for she was a tender-souled as well as generous and friendly woman. In her heart she rejoiced to think that the boy's sufferings would now be at an end; and thenceforward she was, as he always called her, his third mother.

"My poor, ill-used child!" she said. "But I'll be a mother to you—if you'll have me!"

"You wouldn't mind if I thought rather often of my two other mothers, ma'am—would you?" he said.

"God forbid, boy!" she answered. "If I were your real mother, would I have my own flesh and blood ungrateful? Should I be proud of him for loving nobody but me? That's like the worst of the beasts: they love none but their little ones—and that only till they're tired of the trouble of them!"

"Thank you! Then I will be your son Clare, please, ma'am."

The next time they stopped, she made her husband come into her caravan, and then and there she would and

did have everything arranged. When both her husband and the boy would have left his wages undetermined, she would not hear of it, but insisted that so much a week should be fixed at once to begin with. She had no doubt, she said, that her husband would soon be ready enough to raise his wages; but he must have his food and five shillings a week now, and Mr. Halliwell must advance money to get him decent clothes: he might keep the wages till the clothes were paid for!

Everything she wished was agreed to by her husband, and at the next town, Clare's new mother saw him dressed to her satisfaction, and to his own. She would have his holiday clothes better than his present part in life required, and she would not let his sovereign go toward paying for them: that she would keep ready in case he might want it! Her eyes followed him about with anxious pride—as if she had been his mother in fact as she was in truth.

He had at once plenty to do. The favour of his mother saved him from no kind of work, neither had he any desire it should. Every morning he took his share in cleaning out the cages, and in setting water for the beasts, and food for the birds and such other creatures as took it when they pleased. At the proper intervals he fed as many as he might of those animals that had stated times for their meals; and found the advantage of this in its facilitating his friendly approaches to them. He helped with the horses also—with whose harness and ways he was already familiar. In a very short time he was known as a friend by every civilized animal in and about the caravans.

He did all that was required of him, and more. Not

everyone of course had a right to give him orders, but Clare was not particular as to who wanted him, or for what. He was far too glad to have work to look at the gift askance. He did not make trouble of what ought to be none, by saying, with the spirit of a slave, "It's not my place." He did many things which he might have disputed, for he never thought of disputing them. Thus, both for himself and for others, he saved a great deal of time, and avoided much annoyance and much quarrelling. Thus also he gained many friends.

CHAPTER XLVII.

GLUM GUNN.

HE had but one enemy, and he did not make him such: he was one by nature. For he was so different from Clare that he disliked him the moment he saw him, and it took but a day to ripen his dislike into hatred. Like Mr. Maidstone, he found the innocent fearlessness of Clare's expression repulsive. His fingers twitched, he said, to have a twist at the sheep-nose of him. Unhappily for Clare, he was of consequence in the menagerie, having money in the concern. He was half-brother to the proprietor, but so unlike him that he might not have had a drop of blood from the same source. An ill-tempered, imperious man, he would hurt himself to have his way, for he was the merest slave to what he fancied. When a man *will* have a thing, right or wrong, that man is a slave to that thing—the meanest of slaves, a willing one.

He was the terror of the men beneath him, heeding no man but his brother—and him only because he knew "he would stand no nonsense." To his sister-in-law he was civil: she was his brother's wife, and his brother was proud of her! Also he knew that she was perfect in her part of the business. So it was reason to stand as well as he might with her!

Clare had no suspicion that he more than disliked him. It took him days indeed to discover even that he did not love him—notwithstanding the bilious eye which, when its owner was idle, kept constantly following him. And idle he often was, not from laziness, but from the love of ordering about, and looking superior.

It was natural that such a man should also be cruel. There are who find their existence pleasant in proportion as they make that of others miserable. He had no liking for any of the animals, regarding them only as property with never a right;—as if God would make anything live without thereby giving it rights! To Glum Gunn, as he was commonly called behind his back, the animals were worth so much money to sell, and so much to show. Yet he prided himself that he had a great influence as well as power over them, an occult superiority that made him their lord. It was merely a phase of the vulgarest self-conceit. He posed to himself as a lion-tamer! He had never tamed a lion, or any creature else, in his life; but when he had a wild thing safe within iron bars, then he "let him know who was his master!" By the terror of his whip, and means far worse, he compelled obedience. The grizzly alone, of the larger animals, he never interfered with.

From the first he received Clare's "*Good-morning,*

sir," with a silent stare; and the boy at last, thinking he did not like to be so greeted, gave up the salutation. This roused Gunn's anger and increased his hate. But indeed any boy petted by his sister-in-law, would have been odious to him; and any boy whatever would have found him a hard master. Clare was for a while protected by the man's unreadiness to have words with his brother, who always took his wife's part; but the tyrant soon learned that he might venture far.

For he saw, by the boy's ready smile, that he never resented anything, which the brute, as most boys would have done, attributed to cowardice; and he learned that he never carried tales to his sister, of which, instead of admiring him for his reticence, he took advantage, and set about making life bitter to him.

It was some time before he began to succeed, for Clare was hard to annoy. Patient, and right ready to be pleased, he could hardly imagine offence intended; the thought was all but unthinkable to Clare's nature; so he let evil pass and be forgotten as if it had never been. Once, as he ran along with a heavy pail of water, Gunn shot out his foot and threw him down: he rose with a cut in his forehead, and a smile on his lips. He carried the mark of the pail as long as he carried his body, but it was long before he believed he had been tripped up. Had it been proved to him at the time, he would have taken it as a joke, intending no hurt. He did not see the lurid smile on the man's face as he turned away, a smile of devilish delight at the discomfiture of a hated fellow-creature. Gunn put him to the dirtiest work—only to find that it did not trouble him: the boy was a rare gentleman—unwilling another should have more that he

might have less of the disagreeable. I have two or three times heard him say that no man had the right to require of another the thing he would think degrading to himself. He said he learned this from the New Testament. "But," he said, "nothing God has made necessary, can possibly be degrading. It may not be the thing for this or that man, at this or that time, to do, but it cannot in itself be degrading."

The boy had to take his turn with several in acting showman to the gazing crowd, and by and by the part fell to him oftenest. Each had his own way of filling the office. One would repeat his information like a lesson in which he was not interested, and expected no one else to be interested. Another made himself the clown of the exhibition, and joked as much and as well as he could. Gunn delighted in telling as many lies as he dared: he must not be suspected of making fools of his audience! Clare, who from books knew far more than any of the others concerning the creatures in their wild state, and who, by watching them because he loved them, had already noted things none of the others had observed, and was fast learning more, talked to the spectators out of his own sincere and warm interest, giving them from his treasure things new and old—things he had read, and things he had for himself discovered. Group after group of simple country people would listen intently as he led them round, eager after every word; and as any peg will do to hang hate upon, even this success was noted with evil eye by Glum Gunn. Almost anything served to increase his malignity. Whether or not it grew the faster that he had as yet found no wider outlet for it, I cannot tell.

At last, however, the tyrant learned how to inflict the keenest pain on the tender-hearted boy, counting him the greater idiot that he could so "be got at," as he phrased it, and promising himself much enjoyment from the discovery. But he did not know—how should he know—what love may compel!

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE PUMA.

I NEED hardly say that by this time all the beasts with any friendliness in them had for Clare a little more than their usual amount of that feeling. But there was one between whom and him—I prefer *who* to *which* for certain animals—a real friendship had begun at once, and had grown and ripened rapidly till it was strong on both sides. Clare's new friend—and companion as much as circumstance permitted—was the same whose lonely gambols had so much attracted him the night he first entered the menagerie. The animal, whom Clare had taken for a young lion—without being so far wrong, for he has often been called the American lion—was the puma, or couguar, peculiar to America, with a relation to the jaguar, also American, a little similar to that of the lion to the tiger. But while the jaguar is as wicked a beast as the tiger, the puma possesses, in relation to man, far more than the fabulous generosity of the lion. Like every good creature he has been misunderstood and slandered, but a few have known him. He has doubtless

degenerated in districts, for as the wild animal must gradually disappear before the human, he cannot help becoming in the process less friendly to humanity; but an essential and distinctive characteristic of the puma is his love for the human being—a love persistent, devoted, and long-suffering.

Between such an animal and Clare, it is not surprising that friendship should at once have blossomed. He stroked the paw of the Indian lion the first morning, but the day was not over when he was stroking the cheek of the puma; while all he could do with the grizzly at the end of the month was to feed him a little on the sly, and get for thanks a growl of the worse hate. There are men that would soonest tear their benefactors, loathing them the more that they cannot get at them. I suspect that in some mysterious way Glum Gunn and the bear were own brothers. With the elephant Clare did what he pleased—never pleasing anything that was not pleasing to the elephant.

They came to a town where they exhibited every day for a week, and there it was that the friendship of Clare and the puma reached its perfection. One night the boy could not sleep, and drawn by his love, went down among the cages to see how his fellow-creatures were getting through the time of darkness. There was just light enough from a small moon to show the dim outlines of the cages, and the motion without the form of any moving animal. The puma, in his solitary yet joyous gymnastics, was celebrating the rites of freedom according to his custom. When Clare entered, he made a peculiar purring noise, and ceased his amusement—a game at ball, with himself for the ball. Clare went to him, and began

as usual to stroke him on the face and nose; whereupon the puma began to lick his hand with his dry rough tongue. Clare wondered how it could be nice to have such a dry thing always in his mouth, but did not pity him for what God had given him. He had his arm through between the bars of the cage, and his face pressed close against them, when suddenly the face of the animal was rubbing itself against what it could reach of his. The end was, that Clare drew aside the bolt of the cage-door, and got in beside the puma. The creature's gladness was even greater than if he had found a friend of his own kind. Noses and cheeks and heads were rubbed together; tongue licked, and hand stroked and scratched. Then they began to frolic, and played a long time, the puma jumping over Clare, and Clare, afraid to jump lest he should make a noise, tumbling over the puma. The boy at length went fast asleep; and in the morning found the creature lying with his head across his body, wide awake but motionless, as if guarding him from disturbance. Nobody was stirring; and Clare, who would not have their friendship exposed to every comment, crept quietly from the cage, and went to his own bed.

The next night, as soon as the place was quiet, Clare went down, and had another game with the puma. Before their sport was over, he had begun to teach him some of the tricks he had taught Abdiel; but he could not do much for fear of making a noise and alarming some keeper.

The same thing took place, as often as it was possible, for some weeks, and Clare came to have as much confidence, in so far at least as good intention was concerned, in the puma as in Abdiel. If only he could have him

out of the cage, that the dear beast might have a little taste of old liberty! But not being certain how the puma would behave to others, or if he could then control him, he felt he had no right to release him.

Now and then he would fall asleep in the cage, whereupon the puma would always lie down close beside him. Whether the puma slept, I do not know.

On one such occasion, Clare started to his feet half-awake, roused by a terrific roar. Right up on end stood the couguar, flattening his front against the bars of the cage, which he clawed furiously, snarling and spitting and yelling like the huge cat he was, every individual hair on end, and his eyes like green lightning. Clatter, clatter, went his great feet on the iron, as he tore now at this bar now at that, to get at something out in the dim open space. It was too dark for Clare to see what it was that thus infuriated him, but his ear discovered what his eye could not. For now and then, woven into the mad noise of the wild creature, in which others about him were beginning to join, he heard the modest whimper of a very tame one—Abdiel, against whose small person, gladly as he would have been "naught a while," this huge indignation was levelled. Must there not be a deeper ground for the enmity of dogs and cats than evil human incitement? Their antipathy will have to be explained in that history of animals which I have said must one day be written.

Clare had taken much pains to make Abdiel understand that he was not to intrude where his presence was not desired—that the show was not for him, and thought the dog had learned perfectly that never on any pretence, or for any reason, was he to go down those steps, how-

ever often he saw his master go down. This prohibition was a great trial to Abdiel's loving heart, but it had not until this night been a trial too great for his loving will.

When Clare left him, he thought he had taken his usual pains in shutting him into a small cage he had made to use on such occasions, lest he might be tempted to think, when he saw nobody about, that the law no longer applied. But he had not been careful enough; and Abdiel, sniffing about and finding his door unfastened, had interpreted the fact as a sign that he might follow his master. Hence all the coil. For pumas—whereby also must hang an explanation in that book of zoology, have an intense hatred of dogs. Tame from cubhood, they never get over their antipathy to them. With pumas it is "Love you, hate your dog." In the present case there could be no individual jealousy, of which passion beasts and birds are very capable, for Pummy had never seen Abby before. There may be in the puma an inborn jealousy of dogs, as a race more favoured than pumas by the man whom yet they love perhaps more passionately.

As soon as Clare saw what the matter was, he slipped out of the cage, and catching up the obnoxious offender —where he stood wagging all over as if his entire body were but a self-informed tail—sped with him to his room, and gave him a serious talking-to.

The puma was quiet the moment the dog was out of his sight. Doubtless he regarded Clare as his champion in distress, and blessed him for the removal of that which his soul hated. But, alas, mischief was already afoot! Gunn, waked by the roaring, came flying with his whip, and the remnants of poor Pummy's excitement were

enough to betray him to the eyes of the tamer of caged animals. Clare would have recognized by the roar itself the individual in trouble; but Glum Gunn had little knowledge even of the race. He counted the couguar a coward, because he showed no resentment. A man may strike him or wound him, and he will make no retaliation; he will even let a man go on to kill him, and make no defence beyond moans and tears. But Gunn knew nothing of these facts; he only knew that *this* puma would not touch *him*. He was not aware that if he turned the two into the arena of the show, the puma would kill the grizzly; or that in their own country, the puma persecutes the jaguar as if he hated him for not being like himself, the friend of man: the Gauchos of the Pampas call him "The Christians' Friend." Gunn did not even know that the horse is the puma's favourite food: he will leap on the back of a horse at full speed, with his paws break his neck as he runs, and come down with him in a rolling heap. Neither did he know that, while submissive to man—as if the maker of both had said to him, "Slay my other creatures, but do my anointed no harm," —he could yet upon occasion be provoked to punish though not to kill him.

Glum Gunn rushed across the area, jumped into the cage of the puma, and began belabouring him with his whip. The beast whimpered and wept, and the brute belaboured him. Clare heard the changed cry of his friend, and came swooping like the guardian angel he was. When he saw the patient creature on his haunches like a dog, accepting Gunn's brutality without an attempt to escape it—except, indeed, by dodging any blows at his head so cleverly that the ruffian could not once hit it—

he bounded to the cage, wild with anger and pity. But Gunn stood with his back against the door of it, and he was reduced to entreaty.

"Oh, sir! sir!" he cried, in a voice full of tears; "it was all my fault! Abby came to look for me, and I didn't know Pummy disliked dogs!"

"Do you tell me, you rascal, that you were down among the hanimals when I supposed you in your bed?"

"Yes, sir, I was. I didn't know there was any harm. I wasn't doing anything wrong."

"Hold your jaw! What *was* you doing?"

"I was only in the cage with the puma."

"You was! You have the impudence to tell me that to my face! I'll teach you, you cotton-face! you milk-pudding! to go corrupting the hanimals and making them not worth their salt!"

He swung himself out of the cage-door in a fury, but Clare, with his friend in danger, would not run. The wretch seized him by the collar, and began to lash him as he had been lashing the puma. Happily he was too close to him to give him such stinging blows.

With the first hiss of the thong, came a tearing screech from the puma, as he flung himself in fury upon the door of his cage. Gunn in his wrath with Clare had forgotten to bolt it. Dragging with his claws, he found it unfastened, pulled it open, and like a huge shell from a mortar, shot himself at Gunn. Down he went. For one moment the puma stood over him, swinging his tail in great sweeps, and looking at him, doubtless with indignation. Then before Clare could lay hold of him, for Clare too had fallen by the onset, Pummy turned a scornful back upon his enemy, and walking away with a slow, care-

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CLARE FINDS THE ADVANTAGE OF A POWERFUL FRIEND

less stride, as if he were not worth thinking of more, leaped into his cage, and lay down. The thing passed so swiftly that Clare did not see him touch the man with his paw, and thought he had but thrown him down with his weight. The beast, however, had not left the brute without the lesson he needed; he had given him just one little pat on the side of the head.

Gunn rose staggering. The skin and something more was torn down his cheek from the temple almost to the chin, and the blood was streaming. Clare hastened to help him, but he flung him aside, muttering with an oath, "I'll make you pay for this!" and went out, holding his head with both hands.

Clare went and shot the bolt of the cage. Pummy sprang up. His tail and swift-shifting feet showed eager expectation of a romp. He had already forgotten the curling lash of the terrible whip! But Clare bade him good-night with a kiss through the bars.

Glum Gunn kept his bed for more than a week. When at length he appeared, a demonstration of the best art of the surgeon of the town, he was not beautiful to look upon. To the end of his evil earthly days he bore an ugly scar; and neither his heart nor his temper were the better for his well deserved punishment.

Mrs. Halliwell questioned Clare about the whole thing, inquiring further and further as his answers suggested new directions. Her catechism ended with a partial discovery of Gunn's behaviour to her *protégé*, whom she loved the more that he had been so silent concerning it. She stood perturbed. One moment her face flushed with anger, the next turned pale with apprehension. She bit her lip, and the tears came in her eyes.

"Never mind, mother," said Clare, who saw no reason for such emotion; "I'm not afraid of him."

"I know you're not, sonny," she answered; "but that don't make me the less afraid for you. He's a bad man, that brother-in-law of mine! I fear he'll do you a mischief. I'm afraid I did wrong in taking you! I ought to have done what I could for you without keeping you about me. We can't get rid of him because he's got money in the business. Not that he's part owner—I don't mean that! If we'd got the money handy, we'd pay him off at once!"

"I don't care about myself," said Clare. "I don't mean I like to be kicked, but it don't make me miserable. What I can't bear is to see him cruel to the beasts. I love the beasts, mother—even cross old Grizzly.—But Mr. Gunn don't meddle much with *him!*"

"He respects his own ugly sort!" answered Mrs. Halliwell, with a laugh.

For a while it was plain to Clare that the master kept an eye on his brother, and on himself and the puma. On one occasion he told the assembled staff that he would have no tyranny: every one knew there was among them but one tyrant. Gunn saw that his brother was awake and watching: it was a check on his conduct, but he hated Clare the worse. For the puma, he was afraid of him now, and went no more into his cage.

With the rest of the men Clare was a favourite, for they knew him true and helpful, and constantly the same: they could always depend on him! Abdiel shared in the favour shown his master. They said the dog was no beauty, and had not a hair of breeding, but he was almost a human creature, if he wasn't too good for one, and it was a shame to kick him.

CHAPTER XLIX.

GLUM GUNN'S REVENGE.

THEY had opened the menagerie in a certain large town. It was the evening-exhibition, and Clare was going his round with his wand of office, pointing to the different animals, and telling of them what he thought would most interest his hearers, when another attendant, the most friendly of all, came behind him, and whispered that Glum Gunn had got hold of Abby, and must be going to do the dog a mischief. Clare instantly gave him his wand, and bolted through the crowd, reproaching himself that, because Abby seemed restless, he had shut him up: if he had not been shut up, Gunn would not have got hold of him!

When he reached the top of the steps, there was Gunn on the platform, addressing the crowd. It was plain to the boy, by this time not inexperienced, that he had been drinking, and, though not drunk, had taken enough to rouse the worst in him. He had the poor dog by the scruff of the neck, and was holding him out at arm's-length. Abdiel was the very picture of wretchedness. Except in colour and size, he was more like a flea than like any sort of dog—with his hind legs drawn up, his tail tucked in tight between them, and his back-bone curved into a half circle. In this uncomfortable plight, the tyrant was making a burlesque speech about him.

"Here you see, ladies and gentlemen," he said, resuming a little, for a few fresh spectators were in the act of joining the border of the crowd, "as I have already had the

honour of informing you, one of the most extraordinary productions of the vegetable kingdom. It is not unnatural that you should be, as I see you are, inclined to dispute the assertion. I am, indeed, far from being surprised at your scepticism; the very strangeness of the phenomenon consists in his being to all appearance neither more nor less than a dog. But when I have the honour of leaving you to your astonishment, I shall have convinced you that he is in reality nothing but a vegetable. I would plainly call him what he is—a cucumber, did I not fear the statement would demand of you more than your powers of credence, evidently limited, could well afford. But when I have, before your eyes, cut the throat of this vegetable, so extremely like an ugly mongrel, and when those eyes see no single drop of blood follow the knife, then you will be satisfied of the truth of my assertion; and, having gazed on such a specimen of Nature's jugglery, will, I hope, do me the honour to walk up and behold yet greater wonders within."

He ceased, and set about getting his knife from his pocket.

Clare, watching Gunn's every motion, had partially sheltered himself behind the side of the doorway. One who did not know Gunn, might well have taken the thing for a practical joke, as innocent as it was foolish, the pretended conclusion of which would be met by some comical frustration, probably the dog's escape; but Clare saw that his friend was in mortal peril. With the eye of one used to wild animals and the unexpectedness of their sudden motions, he stood following every movement of Gunn's hands, ready to anticipate whatever action might indicate its own approach: he watched like the

razor-clawed lynx. While Gunn held Abdiel as he did, he could not seriously injure him; and although he was hurting him dreadfully, his hate-possessed fingers, like a live, writhing vice, worrying and squeezing the skin of his poor little neck, it yet was better to wait the right moment.

When he saw the arm that held the dog drawn in, and the other hand move to the man's pocket, he knew that in a moment more, with a theatrical cry of dismay from the murderer, the body of his friend would be dashed on the ground, his head half off, and the blood streaming from his neck. They were mostly a rather vulgar people that stood about the platform, not a few of them capable of being delighted with such an end to a joke poor without some catastrophe.

The wretch had stooped a little, and slightly relaxed his hold on the dog to open his knife, when with a bound that doubled the force of the blow Clare struck him on the side of the head. He had no choice where to hit him, and his fist fell on the spot so lately torn by the claws of Pummy. The tyrant fell, and lay for a moment stunned. Abdiel flung himself on his master, exultant at finding the thing after all the joke he had been trying in vain to believe it. Clare caught him up and dashed down the steps, one instant before Glum Gunn rose, cursing furiously. Clare charged the crowd: it was not a time to be civil! Abdiel's life was in imminent danger! That his own was in the same predicament did not occur to him.

His sudden rush took the crowd by surprise, or those next the caravans would, I fear, have stopped him. Some started to follow him, but the portion of the crowd he

came to next, had more in it of a better sort, and closed up behind him. There all the women and most of the men took the part of the boy that loved his dog.

"What be you a-shovin' at?" bawled a huge countryman, against whom Gunn made a cannon as he rushed in pursuit. "Aw'll knock 'ee flat—aw wull! Let little un an' 's dawg aloan! Aw be for un! Hit me an' ye choose—aw doan't objec'!"

Every attempt Gunn made to pass him, the man pushed his great body in his way, and he soon saw there was no chance of overtaking Clare. The wings of Hate are swift, but not so swift as those of rescuing Love; and Help is far readier to run to Love than to Hate.

CHAPTER L.

CLARE SEEKS HELP.

CLARE got out of the crowd, and was soon beyond sight of anyone that knew what had taken place, his heart exulting that he had saved his friend who trusted in him. He hurried on, heedless whither, his only thought to get away from the man that would murder Abby; and the town was a long way behind ere the question of what they were to do for supper and shelter presented itself. This had grown a strange thought, so long had the caravan been to him a house of warmth and plenty. But comfort has its disadvantages; and Clare discovered, with some dismay, that he was not quite so free as ere the luxurious life of the last few

weeks began: both Abby and he would be less able, he feared, to bear hunger and cold. It was but to start afresh, however, and grow abler! One consolation was, that, if they felt hunger more, it could not do them so much harm: they had more capital to go upon. He must not gather cowardice instead of courage from a season of prosperity! He was glad for Abdiel, though, that he grew his own clothes: he had left his warmest behind him.

It made him ashamed to find himself regretting his clothes when he had lost a mother! Then it pleased him to think that she had his sovereign, and the wages due since his clothes were paid for. They would help to give Glum Gunn his own, and set the beasts free from him! Then he would go back and spend his life with his mother and Pummy! Poor Pummy! But though Gunn hated him, he was now afraid of him too; and his fear would be the creature's protection! He had imagined it his might that cowed the puma, when it was the animal's human gentleness that made him submissive to man: he knew better now! Clare clasped Abdiel to his bosom, and trudged on. They had gone miles ere it occurred to him that it might be more comfortable for both if each carried his individual burden. He set Abdiel down, and the dog ran vibrating with pleasure. Clare felt himself set down, but with no tail to wag.

It was late in the autumn: they could do without supper, but they must if possible find shelter! A farm-house came in sight. It recalled so vividly Clare's early experiences of houselessness, that beasts and caravans, his mother and Glum Gunn, grew hazy and distant, and the old time drew so near that he seemed to have waked into it out of a long dream. They were back in the old

misery—a misery in which, however, his heart had not been pierced as now with the pangs of innocent creatures unable or unwilling to defend themselves from their natural guardian! It was long before he learned that for weeks Gunn was unable to hurt one of them; that his drinking, his late wound, and the blow Clare had given him, brought on him a severe attack of erysipelas.

When they reached the farm-yard, Clare knew by the aspect of things that the cattle were housed and the horses suppered. He crept unseen into one of the cow-houses: the bodies and breath of the animals would keep them warm! How sweet the smell seemed to him after that of the caravans! An empty stall was before him, like a chamber prepared for his need. He gathered a few straws from under each of the cows, taking care that not one of them should be the less comfortable, and spread with them for Abby and himself a thin couch.

But with the excitement of what had happened, his wonder as to what would come next, and the hunger that had begun to gnaw at him, Clare could not sleep. And as he lay awake, thoughts came to him.

Whence do the thoughts come to us? Of one thing I am sure—that I do not make or even send for my own thoughts. If some greater one did not think about us, we should not think about anything. Then what a wonder is the night! How it works compelling people to think! Surely somehow God comes nearer in the night! Clare began to think how helpless he was. He was not thinking of food and warmth, but of doing things for the beings he loved. It seemed to him hard that he could but love, and nothing more. There was his mother! he could do nothing to deliver her from that

villainous brother-in-law! There was Pummy, exposed to the cruelty of the same evil man! and again he could do nothing for him! There was Maly! he could do nothing for her—nothing to make her father and mother glad for her up in the dome of the angels!

Was it possible that he really could do nothing?

Then came the thought that people used to say prayers in the days when he went with his mother to church. He had been taught to say prayers himself, but had begun to forget them when there was no bed to kneel beside. What did saying prayers mean? In the Bible-stories people prayed when they were in trouble and could not help themselves! Did it matter that he had no church and no bedside? Surely one place must be as good as another, if it was true that God was everywhere! Surely he could hear him wherever he spoke! Neither could there be any necessity for speaking loud! God would hear, however low he spoke! Then he remembered that God knew the thoughts of his creatures: if so, he might think a prayer to him; there was no need for any words!

From the moment of that conclusion, Clare began to pray to God. And now he prayed the right kind of prayer; that is, his prayers were real prayers; he asked for what he wanted. To say prayers asking God for things we do not care about, is to mock him. When we ask for something we want, it may be a thing God does not care to give us; but he likes us to speak to him about it. If it is good for us, he will give it us; if it is not good, he will not give it to us, for it would hurt us. But Clare only asked God to do what he is always doing: his prayer was that God would be good to all his mothers, and to his two fathers, and Mr. Halliwell, and Maly, and

Sarah, and his own baby, and Tommy—and poor Pummy, and would, if Glum Gunn beat him, help him to bear the blows, and not mind them very much. He ended with something like this:

"God, I can't do anything for anybody! I wish I could! You can get near them, God: please do something good to every one of them because I can't. I think I could go to sleep now, if I were sure you had listened!"

Having thus cast all his cares on God, he did go to sleep; and woke in the morning ready for the new day that arrived with his waking.

CHAPTER LI.

CLARE A TRUE MASTER.

IT would take a big book to tell all the things of interest that happened to Clare in the next few weeks. They would be mainly how and where he found refuge, and how he and Abdiel got things to eat. Verily they did not live on the fat of the land. Now and then some benevolent person, seeing him in such evident want, would contrive a job in order to pay him for it: in one place, although they had no need of him, certain good people gave him ten days' work under a gardener, and dismissed him with twenty shillings in his pocket.

One way and another, Clare and Abdiel did not die of hunger or of cold. That is the summary of their history for a good many weeks.

One night they slept on a common, in the lee of a

gypsy tent, and contrived to get away in the morning without being seen. For Clare feared they might offer him something stolen, and hunger might persuade him to ask no questions. Many respectable people will laugh at the idea of a boy being so particular. Such are immeasurably more to be pitied than Clare. No one could be hard on a boy who in such circumstances took what was offered him, but he would not be so honest as Clare—though he might well be more honest than such as would laugh at him.

Another time he went up to a large house, to see if he might not there get a job. He found the place, for the time at least, abandoned: I suppose the persons in charge had deserted their post to make holiday. He lingered about until the evening fell, and then got with Abdiel under a glass frame in the kitchen-garden. But the glass was so close to them that Clare feared breaking it; so they got out again, and lay down on a bench in a shed for potting plants.

Clare was waked in the morning by a sound cuff on the side of the head. He got off the bench, took up Abdiel, and coming to himself, said to the gardener who stood before him in righteous indignation,

"I'm much obliged to you for my bedroom, sir. It was very cold last night."

His words and respectful manner mollified the gardener a little.

"You have no business here!" he returned.

"I know that, sir; but what is a boy to do?" answered Clare. "I wasn't hurting anything, and it was so cold we might have died if we had slept out of doors."

"That's no business of mine!"

"But it is of mine," rejoined Clare; "—except you think a boy that can't get work ought to commit suicide. If he mustn't do that, he can't always help doing what people with houses don't like!"

The gardener was not a bad sort of fellow, and perceived the truth in what the boy said.

"That's always the story!" he replied, however. "Can't get work! No idle boy ever could get work! I know the sort of you—well!"

"Would you mind giving me a chance?" returned Clare eagerly. "I wouldn't ask much wages."

"You wouldn't, if you asked what you was worth!"

"We'd be worth our victuals anyhow!" answered Clare, who always counted the dog.

"Who's we?" asked the man. "Be there a hundred of you?"

"No; only two. Only me and Abdiel here!"

"Oh, that beast of a mongrel?"

The gardener made a stride as if to seize the dog.

Clare bounded from him. The man burst into a mocking laugh.

"He's a good dog, indeed, sir!" said Clare.

"You'll give him the sack before I give you a job."

"We're old friends, sir; we can't be parted!"

"I thought as much!" cried the gardener. "They're always ready to work, an' *so* hungry! But will they part with the mangy dog? Not they! Hard work and good wages ain't nowhere beside a mongrel pup! Get out! Don't I know the whole ugly bilin' of ye!"

Clare turned away with a gentle good-morning, which the man did not get out of his heart for a matter of two days, and departed, hugging Abdiel.

He was often cold and always hungry, but his life was anything but dull. The man who does not know where his next meal is to come from, is seldom afflicted with ennui. That is the monopoly of the enviable with nothing to do, and everything money can get them. A foolish west-end life has immeasurably more discomfort in it than that of a street Arab. The ordinary beggar, while in tolerable health, finds far more enjoyment than most fashionable ladies.

Thus Clare went wandering long, seeking work, and finding next to none—all the time upheld by the feeling that something was waiting for him somewhere, that he was every day drawing nearer to it. Not once yet had he lost heart. In very virtue of unselfishness and lack of resentment, he was strong. Not once had he shed a tear for himself, not once had he pitied his own condition.

CHAPTER LII.

MISS TEMPEST.

WITHOUT knowing it, he was approaching the sea. Walking along a chain of downs, he saw suddenly from the top of one of them, for the first time in his memory though not in his life, the sea—a pale blue cloud, as it appeared, far on the horizon, between two low hills. The sight of it, although he did not at first know what it was, brought with it a strange inexplicable feeling of dolorous pleasure. For this he could not account. It was the faintest revival of an all but obliterated impression

of something familiar to his childhood, lying somewhere deeper than the memory, which was a blank in regard to it. But that feeling was not all that the sight awoke in him. The pale blue cloud bore to him such a look of the eternal, that it seemed the very place for God to live in —the solemn, stirless region of calm in which the being to whom now of late he had first begun in reality to pray, kept his abode. The hungry, worn, tattered boy, with nothing to call his own but a great hope and a little dog, fell down on his bare knees on the hard road, and stretched out his hands in an ecstasy toward the low cloud.

The far-off ringing tramp of a horse's feet aroused him. He rose light as an athlete, the great hope grown twice its former size, and hunger forgotten.

The blue cloud kept in sight, and by and by he knew it was the sea he saw, though how or at what moment the knowledge came to him he could not have told. The track was leading him toward one of the principal southern ports.

By this time he was again very thin; but he had brown cheeks and clear eyes, and, save when suffering immediately from hunger, felt perfectly well. Hunger is a sad thing notwithstanding its deep wholesomeness; but there is immeasurably more suffering in the world from eating too much than from eating too little.

Well able by this time to read the signs of the road, he perceived at length he must be drawing near a town. He had already passed a house or two with a little lawn in front, and indications of a garden behind; and he hoped yet again that here, after all, he might get work. To door after door he carried his modest request: some doors were

shut in his face almost before he could speak; at others he had a civil word from maid, or a rough word from man; from none came sound of assent. It had become harder too to find shelter. Ever as he went, space was more and more appropriated and enclosed; less and less room was left for the man for whom had been made no special cubic provision of earth and air, and who had no money—the most disreputable of conditions in the eyes of such as would be helpless if they had none. A rare philosopher for eyes capable of understanding him, he was a despicable being in the eyes of the comman man. To know a human being one must be human—that is, the divine must be strong in him.

For some days now, neither Clare nor Abdiel had come even within sight of food enough to make a meal. The dog was rather thinner than his master.

"Abdiel," said Clare to him one day, "I fear you will soon be a serpent! Your body gets longer and longer, and your legs get shorter and shorter: you'll be crawling presently, rubbing the hair off your useless little belly on the dusty road! Never mind, Abdiel; you'll be a good serpent. Satan was turned into a bad serpent because he was a bad angel; you will be a good serpent, because you are a good dog! I hope, however, we shall yet put a stop to the serpent-business!"

Abdiel wagged his tail, as much as to say, "All right, master!"

The nights were now very cold; winter was coming fast. Had Clare been long enough in one place for people to know him, he would never have been allowed to go so cold and hungry; but he had always to move on, and nobcdy had time to learn to care about him. So the

terrible sunless season threatened to wrap him in its winding-sheet, and lay him down.

One evening, just before sunset, grown sleepy in spite of the gathering cold, he sat down on one of the two steep grassy slopes that bordered the road. His feet were bare now, bare and brown, for his shoes had come to such plight that it was a relief to throw them away; but his soles had grown like leather. They rested in the dry shallow rain-channel, and his body leaned back against the slope. Abdiel, instead of jumping on the bank and lying in the soft grass, lay down on the leathery feet, and covered them from the night with his long faithful body and its coat of tangled hair.

The sun was shooting his last radiance along the road, and its redness caressed the sleeping companions, when an elderly lady came to her gate at the top of the opposite slope, and looked along the road with the sun. Her reverting glance fell upon the sleepers—the Knight of Hope lying in rags, not marble, his feet not upon his dog, but his dog upon his feet. It was a touching picture, and the old lady's heart was one easily touched. She looked and saw that the face of the boy, whose hunger was as plain as his rags, was calm as the wintry sky. She wondered, but she needed not have wondered; for storm of anger, drought of greed, nor rotting mist of selfishness, had passed or rested there, to billow, or score, or waste.

Her mere glance seemed to wake Abdiel, who took advantage of his waking to have a lick at the brown, dusty, brave, uncomplaining feet, so well used to the world's *via dolorosa*. She saw, and was touched yet more by this ministration of the guardian of the feet. Gently opening the gate she descended the slope, crossed the

road, and stood silent, regarding the outcasts. No cloudy blanket covered the sky: ere morning the dew would lie frozen on the grass!

"You shouldn't be sleeping there!" she said.

Abdiel started to his four feet and would have snarled, but with one look at the lady changed his mind. Clare half awoke, half sat up, made an inarticulate murmur, and fell back again.

"Get up, my boy," said the old lady. "You must indeed!"

"Oh, please, ma'am, must I?" answered Clare, slowly rising to his feet. "I had but just lain down, and I'm *so* tired!—If I mayn't sleep *there*," he continued, "where *am* I to sleep?—Please, ma'am, why is everybody so set against letting a boy sleep? It don't cost them anything! I can understand not giving him work, if he looks too much in want of it; but why should they count it bad of him to lie down and sleep?"

The lady wisely let him talk; not until he stopped did she answer him.

"It's because of the frost, my boy!" she said. "It would be the death of you to sleep out of doors to-night!"

"It's a nice place for it, ma'am!"

"To sleep in? Certainly not!"

"I didn't mean that, ma'am. I meant a nice place to go away from—to die in, ma'am!"

"That is not ours to choose," answered the old lady severely, but the tone of her severity trembled.

"I sha'n't find anywhere so nice as this bank," said Clare, turning and looking at it sorrowfully.

"There are plenty of places in the town. It's but a mile farther on!"

"But this is so much nicer, ma'am! And I've no money —none at all, ma'am. When I came out of prison,—"

"Came out of *where?*"

"Out of prison, ma'am."

He had never been in prison in a legal sense, never having been convicted of anything; but he did not know the difference between detention and imprisonment.

"Prison!" she exclaimed, holding up her hands in horror. "How dare you mention prison!"

"Because I was in it, ma'am."

"And to say it so coolly too! Are you not ashamed of yourself?"

"No, ma'am."

"It's a shame to have been in prison."

"Not if I didn't do anything wrong."

"Nobody will believe that, I'm afraid!"

"I suppose not, ma'am! I used to feel very angry when people wouldn't believe me, but now I see they are not to blame. And now I've got used to it, and it don't hurt so much.—But," he added with a sigh, "the worst of it is, they won't give me any work!"

"Do you always tell people you've come out of prison?"

"Yes, ma'am, when I think of it."

"Then you can't wonder they won't give you work!"

"I don't, ma'am—not now. It seems a law of the universe!"

"Not of the universe, I think—but of this world—perhaps!" said the old lady thoughtfully.

"But there's one thing I do wonder at," said Clare. "When I say I've been in prison, they believe me; but when I say I haven't done anything wrong, then they

mock me, and seem quite amused at being expected to believe that. I can't get at it!"

"I daresay! But people will always believe you against yourself.—What are you going to do, then, if nobody will give you work? You can't starve!"

"Indeed I *can*, ma'am! It's just the one thing I've got to do. We've been pretty near the last of it sometimes—me and Abdiel! Haven't we, Abby?"

The dog wagged his tail, and the old lady turned aside to control her feelings.

"Don't cry, ma'am," said Clare; "I don't mind it—not *much*. I'm too glad I didn't *do* anything, to mind it much! Why should I! Ought I to mind it much, ma'am? Jesus Christ hadn't done anything, and they killed *him!* I don't fancy it's so very bad to die of only hunger! But we'll soon see!—Sha'n't we, Abby?"

Again the dog wagged his tail.

"If you didn't do anything wrong, what *did* you do?" said the old lady, almost at her wits' end.

"I don't like telling things that are not going to be believed. It's like washing your face with ink!"

"I will *try* to believe you."

"Then I will tell you; for you speak the truth, ma'am, and so, perhaps, will be able to believe the truth!"

"How do you know I speak the truth?"

"Because you didn't say, 'I will believe you.' Nobody can be sure of doing that. But you can be sure of *trying;* and you said, 'I will *try* to believe you.'"

"Tell me all about it then."

"I will, ma'am.—The policeman came in the middle of the night when we were asleep, and took us all away, because we were in a house that was not ours."

"Whose was it then?"

"Nobody knew. It was what they call in chancery. There was nobody in it but moths and flies and spiders and rats;—though I think the rats only came to eat baby."

"Baby! Then the whole family of you, father, mother, and all, were taken to prison!"

"No, ma'am; my fathers and my mothers were taken up into the dome of the angels."—What with hunger and sleepiness, Clare was talking like a child.—"I haven't any father and mother in this world. I have two fathers and two mothers up there, and one mother in this world. She's the mother of the wild beasts."

The old lady began to doubt the boy's sanity, but she went on questioning him.

"How did you have a baby with you, then?"

"The baby was my own, ma'am. I took her out of the water-but."

Once more Clare had to tell his story—from the time, that is, when his adoptive father and mother died. He told it in such a simple matter-of-fact way, yet with such quaint remarks, from their very simplicity difficult to understand, that, if the old lady, for all her trying, was not able quite to believe his tale, it was because she doubted whether the boy was not one of God's innocents, with an angel-haunted brain.

"And what's become of Tommy?" she asked.

"He's in the same workhouse with baby. I'm very glad; for what I should have done with Tommy, and nothing to give him to eat, I can't think. He would have been sure to steal! I couldn't have kept him from it!"

"You must be more careful of your company."

"Please, ma'am, I was very careful of Tommy. He

had the best company I could give him: I did try to be better for Tommy's sake. But my trying wasn't much use to Tommy, so long as he wouldn't try! He was a little better, though, I think; and if I had him now, and could give him plenty to eat, and had baby as well as Abdiel to help me, we might make something of Tommy, I think.—*You* think so—don't you, Abdiel?"

The dog, who had stood looking in his master's face all the time he spoke, wagged his tail faster.

"What a name to give a dog! Where did you find it?"

"In Paradise Lost, ma'am. Abdiel was the one angel, you remember, ma'am, who, when he saw what Satan was up to, left him, and went back to his duty."

"And what was his duty?"

"Why of course to do what God told him. I love Abdiel, and because I love the little dog and he took care of baby, I call him Abdiel too. Heaven is so far off that it makes no confusion to have the same name."

"But how dare you give the name of an angel to a dog?"

"To a *good* dog, ma'am! A good dog is good enough to go with any angel—at his heels of course! If he had been a bad dog, it would have been wicked to name him after a good angel. If the dog had been Tommy—I mean if Tommy had been the dog, I should have had to call him Moloch, or Belzebub! God made the angels and the dogs; and if the dogs are good, God loves them.—Don't he, Abdiel?"

Abdiel assented after his usual fashion. The lady said nothing. Clare went on.

"Abdiel won't mind—the angel Abdiel, I mean, ma'am—he won't mind lending his name to my friend. The

dog will have a name of his own, perhaps, some day—like the rest of us!"

"What is *your* name?"

"The name I have now is, like the dog's, a borrowed one. I shall get my own one day—not here—but there—when—when—I'm hungry enough to go and find it."

Clare had grown very white. He sat down, and lay back on the grass. He had talked more in those few minutes than for weeks, and want had made him weak. He felt very faint. The dog jumped up, and fell to licking his face.

"What a wicked old woman I am!" said the lady to herself, and ran across the road like some little long-legged bird, and climbed the bank swiftly.

She disappeared within the gate, but to return presently with a tumbler of milk and a huge piece of bread.

"Here, boy!" she cried; "here is medicine for you! Make haste and take it."

Clare sat up feebly, and stared at the tumbler for a moment. Either he could hardly believe his eyes, or was too sick to take it at once. When he had it in his hand, he held it out to the dog.

"Here, Abdiel, have a little," he said.

This offended the old lady.

"You're never going to give the dog that good milk!" she cried.

"A little of it, please, ma'am!"

"—And feed him out of the tumbler too?"

"He's had nothing to-day, ma'am, and we're comrades!'

"But it's not clean of you!"

"Ah, you don't know dogs, ma'am! His tongue is clean as clean as anybody's."

Abdiel took three or four little laps of the milk, drew away, and looked up at his master—as much as to say, "You, now!"

"Besides," Clare went on, "he couldn't get at it so well in the bottom of the tumbler."

With that he raised it to his own lips, drank eagerly, and set it on the road half empty, looking his thanks to the giver with a smile she thought heavenly. Then he broke the bread, and giving the dog nearly the half of it, began to eat the rest himself. The old lady stood looking on in silence, pondering what she was to do with the celestial beggar.

"Would you mind sleeping in the greenhouse, if I had a bed put up for you?" she said at length, in tone apologetic.

"This is a better place—though I wish it was warmer!" said Clare, with another smile as he looked up at the sky, in which a few stars were beginning to twinkle, and thought of the gardeners he had met. "—Don't you think it better, ma'am?"

"No, indeed, I don't!" she answered crossly; for to her the open air at night seemed wrong, disreputable. There was something unholy in it!

"I would rather stay here," said Clare.

"Why?"

"Because you don't quite believe me, ma'am. You can't; and you can't help it. You wouldn't be able to sleep for thinking that a boy just out of prison was lying in the greenhouse. There would be no saying what he might not do! I once read in a newspaper how an old lady took a lad into her house for a servant, and he murdered her!—No, ma'am, thank you! After such a supper we shall

sleep beautifully!—Sha'n't we, Abby? And then, perhaps, you could give me a job in the garden to-morrow! I daresay the gardener wants a little help sometimes! But if he knew me to have slept in the greenhouse, he would hate me."

The old lady said nothing, for, like most old ladies, she feared her gardener. She took the tumbler from the boy's hand, and went into the house. But in two minutes she came again, with another great piece of bread for Clare, and a bone with something on it which she threw to Abdiel. The dog's ears started up, erect and alive, like individual creatures, and his eyes gleamed; but he looked at his master, and would not touch the bone without his leave—which given, he fell upon it, and worried it as if it had been a rat.

Clare was now himself again, and when the old lady left them for the third time, he walked with her across the way, bread in hand, to open the gate for her. When she was inside, he took off his cap, and bade her good-night with a grace that won all that was left to be won of her heart.

Before she had taken three steps from the gate, the old lady turned.

"Boy!" she called; and Clare, who was making for his couch under the stars, hastened back at the sound of her voice.

"I shall not be able to sleep," she said, "for thinking of you out there in the bleak night!"

"I am used to it, ma'am!"

"Oh, I daresay! but you see I'm not! and I don't like the thought of it! You may like hoarfrost-sheets, for what I know, but I don't! You may like the stars for

a tester—because you want to die and go to them, I suppose!—but I have no fancy for the stars! You are a foolish fellow, and I am out of temper with you. You don't give a thought to me—or to my feelings if you should die! I should never go to bed again with a good conscience!—Besides, I should have to nurse you!"

The last member of her expostulation was hardly in logical sequence, but it had not the less influence on Clare for that.

"I will do whatever you please, ma'am," he answered humbly. "—Come, Abdiel!"

The dog came running across the road with his bone in his mouth.

"You mustn't bring that inside the gate, Ab!" said Clare.

The dog dropped it.

"Good dog! It's a lady's garden, you know, Abdiel!" Then turning to his hostess, Clare added, "I always tell him when I'm pleased with him: don't you think it right, ma'am?"

"I daresay! I don't know anything about dogs."

"If you had a dog like Abdiel, he would soon teach you dogs, ma'am!" rejoined Clare.

By this time they were at the house-door. The lady told him to wait there, went in, and had a talk with her two maids. In half an hour, Clare and his four-footed angel were asleep—in an outhouse, it is true, but in a comfortable bed, such as they had not seen since their flight from the caravans. The cold breeze wandered moaning like a lost thing round the bare walls, as if every time it woke, it went abroad to see if there was any hope for the world; but it did not touch them; and if through their

ears it got into their dreams, it made their sleep the sweeter, and their sense of refuge the deeper.

But although the bewitching boy and his good dog were not lying in the open air over against her gate, and although never a thought of murder or theft came to trouble her, it was long before the old lady found repose. Her heart had been deeply touched.

CHAPTER LIII.

THE GARDENER.

FROM the fact that his hostess made him no answer when he breathed the hope of a job in her garden, Clare concluded that he had presumed in suggesting the thing to her, and that she would be relieved by their departure. When he woke in the morning, therefore, early after a grand sleep, he felt he had no right to linger: he had been invited to sleep, and he had slept! He also shrank from the idea of being supposed to expect his breakfast before he went. So, as soon as he got up, he walked out of the gate, crossed the road, and sat down on the spot he had occupied the night before, there to wait until the house should be astir. For, although he could not linger within gates where he was unknown, neither could he slink away without morning-thanks for the gift of a warm night.

As he sat, he grew drowsy, and leaning back, fell fast asleep.

The thoughts of his hostess had been running on very

different lines, and she woke with feelings concerning the pauper very different from those the pauper imagined in her. She *must* do something for him; she must give or get him work! As to giving him work, her difficulty lay in the gardener. She resolved, however, to attempt overcoming it.

She rose earlier than usual, therefore, and as the man, who did not sleep in the house, was not yet come, she went down to the gate to meet him and have the thing over—so eager was she, and so nervous in prospect of such an interview with her dreaded servant.

"Good gracious!" she murmured aloud, "does it rain beggars?" For there, on the same spot, lay another beggar, another boy, with a dog in his bosom the facsimile of the ugly white thing named after Milton's angel! She did not feel moved to go and make his acquaintance. It could not be another of the family, could it? that had already heard of his brother's good luck, and come to see whether there might not be a picking for him too! She turned away hurriedly lest he should wake, and went back to the house.

But looking behind her as she mounted the steps, she caught sight of the gardener at the other gate, casting a displeased look across the road before he entered: he did not like to see tramps about! Her heart sank a little, but she was not to be turned aside.

The gardener came in, and his mistress joined him and walked with him to his work, telling him as much as she thought fit concerning the boy, and interspersing her narrative with hints of the duty of giving every one a chance. She took care not to mention that he had come out of a prison somewhere.

"No one should be driven to despair," she said, little thinking she used almost the very words of the Lord, according to the Sinaitic reading of a passage in St. Luke's gospel.

The argument had little force with the rough Scotchman: his mistress was soft-hearted! He shook his head ominously at the idea of giving a tramp the chance of doing decent work, but at last consented, with a show of being over-persuaded to an imprudent action, to let the boy help him for a day, and see how he got on, stipulating, however, that he should not be supposed to have pledged himself to anything.

Miss Tempest's plans went beyond the gardener's scope. She had for some months been inclined to have a boy to help in the house—an inclination justified by a late unexpected accession of income: if this boy were what he seemed, he would make a more than valuable servant; and nothing could clear her judgment of him better, she thought, than putting him to the test of a brief subjection to the cross-grained, exacting Scotchman. By that she would soon know whether to dismiss him, or venture with him farther!

She had but just wrung his hard consent from the gardener, when the cook came running, to say the boy was gone. Upon poor Miss Tempest's heart fell a cold avalanche.

"But we've counted the spoons, ma'am, and they're all right!" said the cook

This additional statement, however, did not seem to give much consolation to the benevolent old lady. She stood for a moment with her eyes on the ground, too pained to move or speak. Then she started, and ran to

the gate. The cook ran after, thinking her mistress gone out of her mind—and was sure of it when she saw her open the gate, and run straight down the bank to the road. But when she reached the gate herself, she saw her standing over a boy asleep on the grass of the opposite bank.

Abdiel, lying on his bosom, watched her with keen friendly eyes. Clare was dreaming some agreeable morning-dream; for a smile of such pleasure as could haunt only an innocent face, flickered on it like a sunny ripple on the still water of a pool.

"No!" said Miss Tempest to herself; "there's no duplicity there! Otherwise, a tree is not known by its fruit!"

Clare opened his eyes, and started lightly to his feet, strong and refreshed.

"Good morning, ma'am!" he said, pulling off his cap.

"Good morning—what am I to call you?" she returned.

"Clare, if you please, ma'am."

"What is your Christian name?"

"That is my Christian name, ma'am—Clare."

"Then what is your surname?"

"I am *called* Porson, ma'am, but I have another name. Mr. Porson adopted me."

"What is your other name?"

"I don't know, ma'am. I am going to know one day, I think; but the day is not come yet."

He told her all he could about his adoptive parents, and little Maly; but the time before he went to the farm was growing strangely dreamlike, as if it had sunk a long way down in the dark waters of the past—all up

to the hour when Maly was carried away by the long black aunt.

The story accounted to Miss Tempest both for his good speech and the name of his dog. The adopted child of a clergyman might well be acquainted with *Paradise Lost*, though she herself had never read more of it than the apostrophe to Light in the beginning of the third book! That she had learned at school without understanding phrase or sentence of it; while Clare never left passage alone until he understood it, or, failing that, had invented a meaning for it.

"Well, then, Clare, I've been talking to my gardener about you," said Miss Tempest. "He will give you a job."

"God bless you, ma'am! I'm ready!" cried Clare, stretching out his arms, as if to get them to the proper length for work. "Where shall I find him?"

"You must have breakfast first."

She led the way to the kitchen.

The cook, a middle-aged woman, looked at the dog, and her face puckered all over with points of interrogation and exclamation.

"Please, cook, will you give this young man some breakfast? He wanted to go to work without any, but that wouldn't do—would it, cook?" said her mistress.

"I hope the dog won't be running in and out of my kitchen all day, ma'am!"

"No fear of that, cook!" said Clare; "he never leaves me."

"Then I don't think—I'm afraid," she began, and stopped. "—But that's none of my business," she added. "John will look after his own—and more!"

Miss Tempest said nothing, but she almost trembled;

for John, she knew, had a perfect hatred of dogs. Nor could anyone wonder, for, gate open or gate shut, in they came and ran over his beds. She dared not interfere! He and Clare must settle the question of Abdiel or no Abdiel between them! She left the kitchen.

The cook threw the dog a crust of bread, and Abdiel, after a look at his master, fell upon it with his white, hungry little teeth. Then she proceeded to make a cup of coffee for Clare, casting an occasional glance of pity at his garments, so miserably worn and rent, and his brown bare feet.

"How on the face of this blessed world, boy, do you expect to work in the garden without shoes?" she said at length.

"Most things I can do well enough without them," answered Clare; "—even digging, if the ground is not very hard. My feet used to be soft, but now the soles of them are like leather.—They've grown their own shoes," he added, with a smile, and looked straight in her eyes.

The smile and the look went far to win her heart, as they had won that of her mistress: she felt them true, and wondered how such a fair-spoken, sweet-faced boy could be on the tramp. She poured him out a huge cup of coffee, fried him a piece of bacon, and cut him as much bread and butter as he could dispose of. He had not often eaten anything but dry bread, in general very dry, since he left the menagerie, and now felt feasted like an emperor. Pleased with the master, the cook fed the dog with equal liberality; and then, curious to witness their reception by John, between whom and herself was continuous feud, she conducted Clare to the gardener.

From a distance he saw them coming. With look irate fixed upon the dog, he started to meet them. Clare knew too well the meaning of that look, and saw in him Satan regarding Abdiel with eye of fire, and the words on his lips—

"And fly, ere evil intercept thy flight."

The moment he came near enough, without word, or show of malice beyond what lay in his eye, he made, with the sharp hoe he carried, a sudden downstroke at the faithful angel, thinking to serve him as Gabriel served Moloch. But Abdiel was too quick for him: he had read danger in his very gait the moment he saw him move, and enmity in his eyes when he came nearer. He kept therefore his own eyes on the hoe, and never moved until the moment of attack. Then he darted aside. The weapon therefore came down on the hard gravel, jarring the arm of his treacherous enemy. With a muttered curse John followed him and made another attempt, which Abdiel in like manner eluded. John followed and followed; Abdiel fled and fled—never farther than a few yards, seeming almost to entice the man's pursuit, sometimes pirouetting on his hind legs to escape the blows which the gardener, growing more and more furious with failure, went on aiming at him. Fruitlessly did Clare assure him that neither would the dog do any harm, nor allow any one to hit him. It was from very weariness that at last he desisted, and wiping his forehead with his shirt-sleeve, turned upon Clare in the smothered wrath that knows itself ridiculous. For all the time the cook stood by, shaking with delighted laughter at his every fresh discomfiture.

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THE GARDENER'S DISCOMFITURE.

"Awa', ye deil's buckie," he cried, "an tak' the little Sawtan wi' ye! Dinna lat me see yer face again."

"But the lady told me you would give me a job!" said Clare.

"I didna tell her I wad gie yer tyke a job! I wad though, gien he wad lat me!"

"He's given you a stiff one!" said the cook, and laughed again.

The gardener took no notice of her remark.

"Awa' wi' ye!" he cried again, yet more wrathfully, "—or—"

He raised his hand.

Clare looked in his eyes and did not budge.

"For shame, John!" expostulated the cook. "Would you strike a child?"

"I'm no child, cook!" said Clare. "He can't hurt me much. I've had a good breakfast!"

"Lat 'im tak' awa' that deevil o' a tyke o' his, as I tauld him," thundered the gardener, "or I'll mak' a pulp o' 'im!"

"I've had such a breakfast, sir, as I'm bound to give a whole day's work in return for," said Clare, looking up at the angry man; "and I won't stir till I've done it. Stolen food on my stomach would turn me sick!"

"Gien it did, it wadna be the first time, I reckon!" said the gardener.

"It *would* be the first time!" returned Clare. "You are very rude.—If Abdiel understood Scotch, he would bite you," he added, as the dog, hearing his master speak angrily, came up, ears erect, and took his place at his side, ready for combat.

"Ye'll hae to tak' some ither mode o' payin' the debt!"

said John. "Stick spaud in yird here, ye sall not! You or I maun flit first!"

With that he walked slowly away, shouldering his hoe.

"Come, Abdiel," said Clare; "we must go and tell Miss Tempest! Perhaps she'll find something else for us to do. If she can't, she'll forgive us our breakfast, and we'll be off on the tramp again. I thought we were going to have a day's rest—I mean work; that's the rest we want! But this man is an enemy to the poor."

The gardener half turned, as if he would speak, but changed his mind and went his way.

"Never mind John!" said the cook, loud enough for John to hear. "He's an old curmudgeon as can't sleep o' nights for quarrellin' inside him. I'll go to mis'ess, and you go and sit down in the kitchen till I come to you."

CHAPTER LIV.

THE KITCHEN.

CLARE went into the kitchen, and sat down. The housemaid came in, and stood for a moment looking at him. Then she asked him what he wanted there.

"Cook told me to wait here," he answered.

"Wait for what?"

"Till she came to me. She's gone to speak to Miss Tempest."

"I won't have that dog here."

"When I had a home," remarked Clare, "our servant said the cook was queen of the kitchen: I don't want to be rude, ma'am, but I must do as she told me."

"She never told you to bring that mangy animal in here!"

"She knew he would follow me, and she said nothing about him. But he's not mangy. He hasn't enough to eat to be mangy. He's as lean as a dried fish!"

The housemaid, being fat, was inclined to think the remark personal; but Clare looked up at her with such clear, honest, simple eyes, that she forgot the notion, and thought what a wonderfully nice boy he looked.

"He's shamefully poor, though! His clothes ain't even decent!" she remarked to herself.

And certainly the white skin did look through in several places.

"You won't let him put his nose in anything, will you?" she said quite gently, returning his smile with a very pleasant one of her own.

"Abdiel is too much of a gentleman to do it," he answered.

"A dog a gentleman!" rejoined the housemaid with a merry laugh, willing to draw him out.

"Abdiel can be hungry and not greedy," answered Clare, and the young woman was silent.

Miss Tempest and Mrs. Mereweather had all this time been turning over the question of what was to be done with the strange boy. They agreed it was too bad that anyone willing to work should be prevented from earning even a day's victuals by the bad temper of a gardener. But his mistress did not want to send the man away. She had found him scrupulously honest, as is many a bad-tempered man, and she did not like changes. The cook on her part had taken such a fancy to Clare that she did not want him set to garden-work; she would have him

at once into the house, and begin training him for a page. Now Miss Tempest was greatly desiring the same thing, but in dread of what the cook would say, and was delighted, therefore, when the first suggestion of it came from Mrs. Mereweather herself. The only obstacle in the cook's eyes was that same long, spectral dog. The boy could not be such a fool, however,—she said, not being a lover of animals — as let a wretched beast like that come betwixt him and a good situation!

"It's all right, Clare," said Mrs. Mereweather, entering her queendom so radiant within that she could not repress the outshine of her pleasure. "Mis'ess an' me, we've arranged it all. You're to help me in the kitchen; an' if you can do what you're told, an' are willin' to learn, we'll soon get you out of your troubles. There's but one thing in the way."

"What is it, please?" asked Clare.

"The dog, of course! You must part with the dog."

"That I cannot do," returned Clare quietly, but with countenance fallen and sorrowful. "—Come, Abdiel!"

The dog started up, every hair of him full of electric vitality.

"You don't mean you're going to walk yourself off in such a beastly ungrateful fashion—an' all for a miserable cur!" exclaimed the cook.

"The lady has been most kind to us, and we're grateful to her, and ready to work for her if she will let us;—ain't we, Abdiel? But Abdiel has done far more for me than Miss Tempest! To part with Abdiel, and leave him to starve, or get into bad company, would be sheer ingratitude. I should be a creature such as Miss Tempest ought to have nothing to do with: I might serve her as

that young butler I told her of! It's just as bad to be ungrateful to a dog as to any other person. Besides, he wouldn't leave me. He would be always hanging about."

"John would soon knock him on the head."

"Would he, Abdiel?" said Clare.

The dog looked up in his master's face with such a comical answer in his own, that the cook burst out laughing, and began to like Abdiel.

"But you don't really mean to say," she persisted, "that you'd go off again on the tramp, to be as cold and hungry again to-morrow as you were yesterday—and all for the sake of a dog? A dog ain't a Christian!"

"Abdiel's more of a Christian than some I know," answered Clare: "he does what his master tells him."

"There's something in that!" said the cook.

"If I parted with Abdiel, I could never hold up my head among the angels," insisted Clare. "Think what harm it might do him! He could trust nobody after, his goodness might give way! He might grow worse than Tommy!—No; I've got to take care of Abdiel, and Abdiel's got to take care of me!—'Ain't you, Abby?"

"We can't have him here in the kitchen nohow!" said the cook in relenting tone.

"Poor fellow!" said the housemaid kindly.

The dog turned to her and wagged his tail.

"What wouldn't I give for a lover like that!" said the housemaid—but whether of Clare or the dog I cannot say.

"I know what I shall do!" cried Clare, in sudden resolve. "I will ask Miss Tempest to have him up-stairs with her, and when she is tired of either of us, we will go away together."

"A probable thing!" returned the cook. "A lady like Miss Tempest with a dog like that about her! She'd be eaten up alive with fleas! In ten minutes she would!"

"No fear of that!" rejoined Clare. "Abdiel catches all his *own* fleas!—Don't you, Abby?"

The dog instantly began to burrow in his fell of hair—an answer which might be taken either of two ways: it might indicate comprehension and corroboration of his master, or the necessity for a fresh hunt. The women laughed, much amused.

"Look here!" said Clare. "Let me have a tub of water—warm, if you please—he likes that: I tried him once, passing a factory, where a lot of it was running to waste. Then, with the help of a bit of soap, I'll show you a body of hair to astonish you."

"What breed is he?" asked the housemaid.

"He's all the true breeds under the sun, I fancy," returned his master; "but the most of him seems of the sky-blue terrier sort."

The more they talked with Clare, the better the women liked him. They got him a tub and plenty of warm water. Abdiel was nothing loath to be plunged in, and Clare washed him thoroughly. Taken out and dried, he seemed no more for a lady's chamber unmeet.

"Now," said Clare, "will you please ask Miss Tempest if I may bring him on to the lawn, and show her some of his tricks?"

The good lady was much pleased with the cleverness and instant obedience of the little animal. Clare proposed that she should keep him by her.

"But will he stay with me? and will he do what *I* tell him?" she asked.

Clare took the dog aside, and talked to him. He told him what he was going to do, and what he expected of him. How much Abdiel understood, who can tell! but when his master laid him down at Miss Tempest's feet, there he lay; and when Clare went with the cook, he did not move, though he cast many a wistful glance after the lord of his heart. When his new mistress went into the house, he followed her submissively, his head hanging, and his tail motionless. He soon recovered his cheerfulness, however, and seemed to know that his friend had not abandoned him.

CHAPTER LV.

THE WHEEL RESTS FOR A TIME.

THAT part of the human race which is fond of dolls, may now imagine the pleasure of the cook in going to the town in the omnibus to buy everything for a live doll so big as Clare! In a very few days she had him dressed to her heart's content, and the satisfaction of her mistress, who would not have him in livery, but in a plain suit of dark blue cloth: for she loved blue, all her men-people being, or having been in the navy. Thus dressed, he looked as much of a gentleman as before: his look of refinement had owed nothing to the contrast of his rags. Better clothes make not a few seem commoner.

When Mrs. Mereweather came back from the town the first day, she found that the ragged boy had got her kitchen and scullery as nice and clean, and everything

as ready to her hand, as if she had got her work done before she went, which the omnibus would not permit. This rejoiced her much; but being a woman of experience, she continued a little anxious lest his sweet ways should go after his rags, lest his new garments should breed bumptiousness and bad manners. For such a change is no unfrequent result of prosperity. But such had been Mr. Porson's teaching and example, such Mrs. Porson's management, and such the responsiveness of the boy's disposition, that the thought never came to him whether this or that was a thing fit for him to do: if the thing was a right thing, and had to be done, why should not he do it as well as another! To earn his own and Abdiel's bread, he would do anything honest, setting up his back at nothing. But when about a thing, he forgot even his obligation to do it, in the glad endeavour to do it well.

As the days went on, Mrs. Mereweather was not once disappointed in him. He did everything with such a will that both she and the housemaid were always ready to spare and help him. Very soon they began to grow tender over him; and on pretence of his being the earlier drest to open the door, did certain things themselves which he had been quite content to do, but which they did not like seeing him do. Many—I am afraid most boys would have presumed on their generosity, but Clare was nowise injured by it.

Nothing could be kinder than the way his mistress treated him. Having lent him some books, and at once perceived that he was careful of them, she let him have the run of her library when his day's work was over. For he not only read but respected books. Nothing shows

vulgarity more than the way in which some people treat books. No gentleman would write his remarks on the margins of another person's book; no lady would brush her hair as she read one of her own.

From hungry days and cold nights, Clare and Abdiel found themselves *in clover*—the phrase surely of some lover of cows!—and they were more than content. Clare had longed so much for work, and had for so many a weary day sought it in vain, that he valued it now just because it was work. And he seemed to know instinctively that a man ranks, not according to the thing he does, but according to the way he does it. In life it is far higher to do an inferior thing well than to do a superior thing passably.

Clare made good use of his privileges, and read much, educating himself none the worse that he did it unconsciously. He read whatever came in his way. He read really—not as most people read, leaving the sentences behind them like so many unbroken nuts, the kernel of whose meaning they have not seen. He learned more than most boys at school, more even than most young men at college; for it is not what one knows, but what one uses, that is the true measure of learning. Whatever he read, he read from the point of practice. In history or romance he saw—not merely what a man ought to be or do, but what he himself must, at that moment, be or do. There is a very common sort of man calling himself practical, but neglecting to practise the most important things, who would laugh at the idea of Clare being practical, seeing he did not trouble his head about money, or "getting on in the world"—what servants call "bettering themselves;" but such a practical

man will find he has been but a practical fool. Clare took heed to do what was right, and grow a better man. Such a life is the only really practical one.

People wondered how Miss Tempest had managed to get hold of such a nice-looking page, and the good lady was flattered by their wonder. But she knew the world too well to be sure of him yet. She knew that it is difficult, in the human tree, to distinguish between blossom and fruit. Deeds of lovely impulse are the blossom; unvarying, determined rightness is the fruit.

CHAPTER LVI.

STRATEGY.

MISS TEMPEST was the last of an old family, with scarce a relation, and no near one, in the world. Hence the pieces of personal property that had continued in the possession of various branches of the family after land and money, through fault or misfortune, were gone, had mostly drifted into the small pool of Miss Tempest's life now slowly sinking in the sands of time, there to gleam and sparkle out their tale of its old splendour. She did not think often of their money-worth: had she done so, she would have kept them at her banker's; but she valued them greatly both for their beauty and their associations, constantly using as many of them as she could. More than one of her friends had repeatedly tried to persuade her that it was not prudent to have so much plate and so many jewels in the house, for the fact was sure to be known where it was least desirable it should:

she always said she would think about it. At times she would for a moment contemplate sending her valuables to the bank; but her next thought—by no means an unwise one—would always be, "Of what use will they be at the bank? I might as well not have them at all! Better sell them and do some good with the money!—No; I must have them about me!"

There are predatory persons in every large town, who either know or are learning to know the houses in it worth the risk of robbing. When it falls to the lot of this or that house to be attempted, one of the gang will make the acquaintance of some servant in it, with the object of discovering beforehand where its treasure lies, and so reducing the time to be spent in it, and the risk of frustration or capture. Often they seduce one of the household to let them in, or hand out the things they want. Any such gang, however, must soon have become convinced that at Miss Tempest's corruption was impossible, and that they could avail themselves solely of their own internal resources.

It was well now for Miss Tempest that she was so faithful herself as to encourage faithfulness in others: gladly would she have had Abdiel sleep in her room, but she would not take the pleasure of his company from his old master and companion in suffering. The dog therefore slept on Clare's bed, just as he did when the bed was as hard to define as to lie upon, only now he had to take the part neither of blanket nor hot bottle.

One night, about half-past twelve, watchful even in slumber, he sprang up in his lair at his master's feet, listened a moment, gave a low growl, again listened, and gave another growl. Clare woke, and found his

bed trembling with the tremor of his little four-footed guardian. Telling him to keep quiet, he rose on his elbow, and in his turn listened, but could hear nothing. He thought then he would light his candle and go down, but concluded it wiser to descend without a light, and listen under cloak of the darkness. If he could but save Miss Tempest from a fright! He crept out of bed, and went first to the window—a small one in the narrowing of the gable-wall of his attic room: the night was warm, and, loving the night air, he had it open. Hearkening there for a moment, he thought he heard a slight movement below. Very softly he put out his head, and looked down. There was no moon, but in the momentary flash of a lantern he caught sight of a small pair of legs disappearing inside the scullery window, which was almost under his own. Swift and noiseless he hurried down, and reached the scullery door just in time for a little fellow who came stealing out of it, to run against him.

Now Clare had heard the housemaid read enough from the newspapers to guess, the moment he looked from the garret window, that the legs he saw were those of a boy sent in to open a door or window, and when the boy, feeling his way in the dark, came against him, he gripped him by the throat with the squeeze that used to silence Tommy. The prowler knew the squeeze. The moment Clare relaxed it, in a piping whisper came the words,

"Clare! Clare! they said they'd kill me if I didn't!"

"Didn't what?"

"Open the door to them."

"If you utter one whimper, I'll throttle you," said Clare.

He tightened his grasp for an instant, and Tommy,

who had not forgotten that what Clare said, he did, immediately gave in, and was led away. Clare took him in his arms and carried him to his room, tied him hand and foot, and left him on the floor, fast to the bedstead. Then he crept swiftly to the servants' room, and with some difficulty waking them, told them what he had done, and asked them to help him.

Both women of sense and courage, they undertook at once to do their part. But when he proposed that they should open a window, as if it were done by Tommy, and so enticing the burglars to enter, secure the first of them, they, naturally enough, and wisely too, declined to encounter the risk.

The burglars, perplexed by the lack of any sign from Tommy yet the utter quiet of the house, concluded probably that he had fallen somewhere, and was lying either insensible, or unable to move and afraid to cry out—in which case they would be at the mercy of what he might say when he was found.

Those within could hear as little noise without. They went from door to window, wherever an attempt might be made, but all was still. Then it occurred to Clare that he had left the scullery window unwatched. He hastened to it—and was but just in time: two long thin legs were sticking through, and showed by their movements that considerable effort was being made by the body that belonged to them, to enter after them. Legs first was the wrong way, but the youth feared the unknown fate of Tommy, and being pig-headed, would go that way or not at all.

A boy in courage equal to Clare, but of less coolness, would at once have made war on the intrusive legs; but

Clare bethought him that, so long as that body filled the window, no other body could pass that way; so it would be well to keep it there, a cork to the house, making it like the nest of a trap-door-spider. He begged the women, therefore, who had followed him, to lay hold each of an ankle, and stick to it like a clamp, while he ran to get some string.

The women, entering heartily into the business, held on bravely. The owner of the legs made vigorous efforts to release them, more anxious a good deal to get out than he had been to get in, but he was not very strong, and had no scope. His accomplices laid hold of him and pulled; then, with good mother-wit, the women pulled away from each other, and so made of his legs a wedge.

Clare came back with a piece of clothes-line, one end of which he slipped with a running knot round one ankle, and the other in like fashion round the other. Then he cut the line in halves, and drawing them over two hooks in the ceiling, some distance apart, so that the legs continued widespread like a Λ upside down, hauled the feet up as high as he could, and fastened the ends of the lines. Hold lines and hooks, it was now impossible to draw the fellow out.

Leaving the women to watch, and telling them to keep a hand on each of the lines because the scullery was pitch-dark, he went next to his room and looked again from the window. He feared they might be trying to get in at some other place, for they would not readily abandon their accomplices, and doubtless knew what a small household it was! He would see first, therefore, what was doing outside the scullery, and then make a round of doors and windows!

Right under him when he looked out, stood a short, burly figure; another man was taking intermittent hauls at the arms of their leg-tied companion, regardless of his stifled cries of pain when he did so. Clare went and fetched his water-jug, which was half full, and leaning out once more, with the jug upright in his two hands, moved it this way and that until he had it, as nearly as he could determine, just over the man beneath him, and then dropped it. The jug fell plumb, and might have killed the man but that he bent his head at the moment, and received it between his shoulders. It knocked the breath out of him, and he lay motionless. The other man fled. The window-stopper, hearing the crash of the jug, wrenched and kicked and struggled, but in vain. There he had to wait the sunrise, for not a moment sooner would the cook open the door.

When they went out at last, the stout man too was gone. He had risen and staggered into the shrubbery, and there fallen, but had risen once more and got away.

Their captive pretended to be all but dead, thinking to move their pity and be set free. But Clare went to the next house and got the man-servant there to go for the police, begging him to make haste: he knew that his tender-hearted mistress, if she came down before the police arrived, would certainly let the fellow go, and Tommy with him; and he was determined the law should have its way if he could compass it. What hope was there for the wretched Tommy if he was allowed to escape! And what right had they to let such people loose on their neighbours! It was selfishness to indulge one's own pity to the danger of others! He would be his brother's keeper by holding on to his brother's enemy!

Going at last to his room, he found Tommy asleep. The boy was better dressed, but no cleaner than when first he knew him. Clare proceeded to wash and dress. Tommy woke, and lay staring, but did not utter a sound.

"Have your sleep out," said Clare. "The police won't be here, I daresay, for an hour yet."

"I believe you!" returned Tommy, as impudent as ever. His contemplation of Clare had revived his old contempt for him. "I mean to go. I 'ain't done nothing."

"Go, then," said Clare, and took no more heed of him.

"If it's manners you want, Clare," resumed Tommy, "*please* let me go!"

Clare turned and looked at him. The evil expression was hardened on his countenance. He gave him no answer.

"You ain't never agoin' to turn agin an old pal, aire you?" said Tommy.

"I ain't a pal of yours, Tommy, or of any other thief's!" answered Clare.

"I'll take my oath on it to the beak!"

"You'll soon have the chance; I've sent for the police."

Tommy changed his tone.

"Please, Clare, let me go," he whined.

"I will not. I did what I could for you before, and I'll do what I can for you now. You must go with the police."

Tommy began to blubber, or pretend—Clare could not tell which.

"This beastly string's a cuttin' into me!" he sobbed.

Clare examined it, and found it easy enough.

"I won't undo one knot," he answered, "until there's a policeman in the room. "If you make a noise, I will stuff your mouth."

His dread was that his mistress might hear, and spoil all. "It's her house," he said to himself, "but they're my captives!"

Tommy lay still, and the police came.

When they untied and drew out the cork of the scullery window, Clare thought he had seen him before, but could not remember where. One of the policemen, however, the moment his eyes fell on his face, cried out joyfully,

"Ah, ha, my beauty! I've been a lookin' for you!"

"Never set eyes on ye afore," growled the fellow.

"Don't ye say now ye ain't a dear friend o' mine," insisted the policeman, "when I carry yer pictur' in my bosom!"

He drew out a pocket-book, and from it a photograph, at which he gazed with satisfaction, comparing it with the face before him. In another moment Clare recognized the lad sent by Maidstone to exchange band-boxes with him.

"Her majesty the queen wants you for that robbery, you know!" said the policeman.

A boy who loved romance and generosity more than truth and righteousness, would now have regretted the chance he had lost of doing a fine action, and sought yet to set the rascal free. There are men who cheat and make presents; there are men who are saints abroad and churls at home, as Bunyan says; there are men who screw down the wages of their clerks and leave vast sums to the poor; men who build churches with the proceeds of drunkenness; men who promote bubble companies and have prayers in their families morning and evening; men, in a word, who can be very generous with what is not their own; for

nothing ill-gotten is a man's own any more than the money in a thief's pocket: Clare was not of the contemptible order of the falsely generous.

Profiting, doubtless, by Maidstone's own example, the fellow had, as Clare now learned, run away from his master, carrying with him the contents of the till: whether he deserved punishment more than his master, may be left undiscussed.

When first Miss Tempest's friends heard of the attempt to break into her house, they said—what could she expect if she took tramps into her service! They were considerably astonished, however, when they read in the newspaper the terms in which the magistrate had spoken of the admirable courage and contrivance of Miss Tempest's page, and the resolution with which the women of her household had seconded him. If every third house were as well defended, he said, the crime of burglary would disappear.

After the trial, Clare begged and was granted an interview with the magistrate. He told him what he knew about Tommy, and entreated he might be sent to some reformatory, to be kept from bad company until he was able to distinguish between right and wrong, which he thought he hardly could at present. The magistrate promised it should be done, and with kind words dismissed him.

Things returned to their old way at Miss Tempest's. Her friends never doubted she would now at last commit her plate to her banker's strong room, but they found themselves mistaken: she was convinced that, with such servants and Abdiel, it was safe where it was.

The leader of the gang, injured by Clare's water-jug, was soon after captured, and the gang was broken up.

CHAPTER LVII.

ANN SHOTOVER.

SO void of self-assertion was Clare, so prompt at the call of whoever needed him, so quiet yet so quick, so silent in his sympathetic ministrations, so studious and so capable, that, after two years, Miss Tempest began to feel she ought to do what she could to "advance his prospects," even at the loss to herself of his services.

He never came to regard Miss Tempest as he did the other women who had saved him: he never thought of her as his fourth mother. Truly good and kind she was, but she had a certain manner which prevented him from feeling entirely comfortable with her. It did not escape him, however, that Abdiel was thoroughly at his ease in her company; and he believed therefore that the dog knew her better, or at least was more just to her, than he.

The fact was Miss Tempest kept down all her feelings, with a vague sense that to show them would be to waste her substance: it was the one shape that the yet lingering selfishness of a very unselfish person took. Thus she kept him at a distance, and he stayed at a distance, she on her part wondering that he did not open out to her more, but neither doubting that all was right between them. Nothing, indeed, was wrong—only they might have come a little nearer. Perhaps, also, Miss Tempest was a little too conscious of being his patroness, his earthly saviour.

It was natural that, after the defeated robbery, Clare should become a little known to the friends of the

mistress he had so well served; when, therefore, Miss Tempest spoke to her banker concerning the ability of her page, mentioning that, in his spare time, he had been reading hard, as well as attending an evening-school for mathematics, where he gained much approbation from his master, she spoke of one already known by him to one accustomed to regard character.

The banker listened with a solemn listening from which she could not tell what he was thinking. No one ever could tell what Mr. Shotover was thinking: his face was not half a face; it was more a mask than a face. High in the world's regard, rich, and of unquestioned integrity, he was believed to have gathered a large fortune; but he kept his affairs to himself. That he liked his own way so much as never to yield it, I give up to the admiration of such as himself: often kind—when the required mode of the kindness pleased him, a constant church-goer and giver of money, always saying less the more he made up his mind, he had generally no trouble in getting it.

Priding himself on his moral discrimination, he had, now and then, as suited his need, taken from a lower position a young man he thought would serve his purpose, and modelled him to it. He had had his eye on Clare ever since reading the magistrate's eulogy of his contrivance and courage; but when Miss Tempest spoke, he had not made up his mind about him, for something in the boy repelled him. He had scarcely troubled himself to ask what it was, nor do I believe he could have discovered, for the root of the repulsion lay in himself.

Moved in part, however, by the representations of Miss Tempest, in part also, I think, by a desire to discover that the boy was a hypocrite, Mr. Shotover consented to give

him a trial, whereupon Miss Tempest made haste to disclose to her *protegé* the grand thing she had done for him.

She was disappointed at the coolness and lack of interest with which Clare heard her great news. She could not but be gratified that he did not want to leave her, but she was annoyed that he seemed unaware of any advantage to be gained in doing so—high as the social ascent from servitude to clerkship would by most be considered. But Clare's horizon was not that of the world. He had no inclination to more of figures and less of persons. Miss Tempest, however, insisting that she knew what was best for him, and what it was therefore his duty to do, he listened in respectful silence to all she had to say. But what she counted her most powerful argument—that he owed it to himself to rise in the world — did not even touch him, did not move the slightest response in a mind nobly devoid of ambition. Her argument was in truth nonsense; for a man owes himself nothing, owes God everything, and owes his neighbour whatever his own conscience goes on to require of him for his neighbour. Feeling at the same time, however, that she had a huge claim on his compliance with her wishes, Clare consented to leave her kitchen for her friend's bank, where he had of course to take the lowest position, one counted by the rest of the clerks, especially the one just out of it, *menial*, requiring him to be in the bank earlier by half an hour than the others, to be the last to go away at night, and to sleep in the house—where a not uncomfortable room in the attic story was appointed him.

Mr. Shotover himself lived above the bank—with his family, consisting of his wife and two daughters. Mrs.

Shotover suffered from a terrible disease — that of thinking herself ill when nothing was the matter with her except her paramount interest in herself—the source of at least half the incurable disease among idle people. The elder daughter was a high-spirited girl about twenty, with a frank, friendly manner, indicating what God meant her to be, not what she was, or had yet chosen to be. She was not really frank, and seemed far more friendly than she was, being more selfish than she knew, and far more selfish than she seemed: she was merry, and that goes a great way in seeming. Her mother spent no regard upon her; her heart was too full of herself to have in it room for a grown-up daughter as well, with interests of her own. The younger was a child about six, of whom the mother took not so much care by half as a tigress of her cub.

One morning, a little before eight o'clock, as Clare was coming down from his room to open the windows of the bank, he just saved himself from tumbling over something on the attic stair, which was dark, and at that point took rather a sharp turn. The something was a child, who gave a low cry, and started up to run away: there was not light enough for either to discern easily what the other was like. But Clare, to whom childhood was the strongest attraction he yet knew, bent down his face from where he stood on the step above her, and its moonlight glow of love and faith shone clear in the eyes of the little girl. The moment she saw his smile, she knew the soul that was the light of the smile, and her doll dropped from her hands as she raised them to lay her arms gently about his neck.

"Oh!" she said, "you're come!"

He saw now, in the dusk, a pale, ordinary little face, with rather large gray eyes, a rather characterless, tiny, up-turned nose, and a rather pretty mouth.

"Yes, little one. Were you expecting me?" he returned, with his arms about her.

"Yes," she answered, in the tone of one stating what the other must know.

"How was it I frightened you, then?"

"Only at first. I thought you was an ogre! That was before I saw you. Then I knew!"

"Who told you I was coming?"

"Nobody. Nobody knew you was coming but me. I've known it—oh, for such a time!—ever since I was born, I think!"

She turned her head a little and looked down where the doll lay a step or two below.

"You can go now, dolly," she said. "I don't want you any more." Here she paused a while, as if listening to a reply, then went on: "I am much obliged to you, dolly; but what am I to do with you? You won't never speak! It has made me quite sad many a time, you know very well! But you can't help it! So go away, please, and be nobody, for you never would be anybody! I did my best to get you to be somebody, but you wouldn't! Thank you all the same! I will take you and put you where you can be as dull as you please, and nobody will mind."—Here she left Clare, went down, and lifted her plaything.—"Dolly, dolly," she resumed, "he's come! I knew he would! And you don't know it because you're nobody!"

Without looking back, or a word of adieu to Clare, she went slowly down the steps, one by one, with the doll in her arms, manifesting for it neither contempt nor tender-

ness. Many a child would have carried the discrowned favourite by one leg; she carried her in both hands.

Clare waited a while on the narrow, closed-in, wooden stair, not a little wondering, and full of thought. His wonder, however, had no puzzlement in it. The child's behaviour involved no difficulty. The two existences came together, and each understood the other in virtue of its essential nature. In after years Clare could put the thing into such words; he sought none at the time. The child was lonely. She had done her best with her doll, but it had failed her. It was not companionable. The moment she looked in Clare's face, she knew that he loved her, and that she had been waiting for *him!* She was not surprised to see him; how should it be otherwise than just so! He was come: good bye, dolly! The child had imagination—next to conscience the strongest ally of common sense. She knew, like St. Paul, that an idol is nothing. As men and women grow in imagination and common sense, more and more will sacred silly dolls be cast to the moles and the bats. But pretty Fancy and limping Logic are powerful usurpers in commonplace minds.

Clare saw nothing more of her that day, neither tried to see her; but he did his work in an atmosphere of roses. The work was not nearly so interesting as house-work, but Clare was an honest gentleman, therefore did it well: that it was not interesting was of no account; it was his work! But to know that a child was in the house, not merely a child for him to love, but a child that already loved him so that he could be her servant indeed, changed the stupid bank almost into the dome of the angels.

His fellow clerks took little notice of him beyond what,

in the routine of the day, was unavoidable. He had been a page-boy: the less they did with him the better! Were they not wronged by his introduction into their company? The poorest creature of them believed he would have served out the burglars better if the chance had been his.

CHAPTER LVIII.

CHILD-TALK.

AS Clare came down the next morning but one, there was the child again on the dark narrow stair. She had no doll. Her hands lay folded in her lap. She sat on the same step, the very image of child-patience. As he approached she did not move. I believe she held solemn revel of expectation. He laid his hand on the whitey-brown hair smoothed flat on her head with a brush dipped in water. Not much dressing was wasted on Ann —common little name!

She rose, turned to him, and again laid her arms about his neck. No kiss followed: she had not been taught to kiss.

"Where's dolly?" asked Clare.

"Nowhere. Buried," answered the child.

"Where did you bury her? In the garden?"

"No. The garden wouldn't be nowhere!"

"Where, then?"

"Nowhere. I threw her out of the window."

"Into the street?"

"Yes. She did fell on a horse's back, and he jumped. I was sorry."

"It didn't hurt him. I hope it didn't hurt dolly!"

The moment he said it, Clare's heart reproached him: he was not talking true! he was not talking out of his real heart to the child! Almost with indignation she answered:—

"*Things* don't be hurt! Dolly was a thing! She's *no* thing now!"

"Why?"

"Because she fell under the horse, and was seen no more."

"Is she old enough," thought Clare, "to read the Pilgrim's Progress?"

"Will you tell me, please," he said, "*when* a thing is only a thing?"

"When it won't mind what you do or say to it."

"And when is a thing no thing any more?"

"When you never think of it again."

"Is a fly a thing?"

"I *could* make a fly mind, only it would hurt it!"

"Of course we wouldn't do that!"

"No; we don't want to make a fly mind. It's not one of our creatures."

Clare thought that was far enough in metaphysics for one morning.

"I waited for you yesterday," he said, "but you didn't come!"

"Dolly didn't like to be buried. I mean, I didn't like burying dolly. I cried and wouldn't come."

"Then why did you bury dolly?"

"She *had* to be buried. I told you she couldn't *be* anybody! So I *made* her be buried."

"I see! I quite understand.—But what have you to amuse yourself with now?"

"I don't want to be mused now. You's come! I'm growed up!"

"Yes, of course!" answered Clare; but he was puzzled what to say next.

What could he do for her? Glad would he have been to take her down to the sea, or to the docks, or into the country somewhere, till dinner-time, and then after dinner take her out again! But there was his work—ugly, stupid work that *had* to be done, as dolly *had* to be buried! Alas for the child who has discarded her toys, and is suddenly growed up! What is she to do with herself? Clare's coming had caused the loss of Ann's former interests: he felt bound to make up to her for that loss. But how? It was a serious question, and not being his own master, he could not in a moment answer it.

"I wish I could stay with you all day!" he said. "But your papa wants me in the bank. I must go."

Clare had not had a good sight of the child, and was at a loss to think what must be her age. Her language, both in form and utterance, was partly precise and *grown-up*, and partly childish; but her wisdom was child-like—and that is the opposite both of precise and childish. It was the wisdom that comes of unity between thought and action.

"Is there anything I can do for you before I go—for I must go?" said Clare.

"Who says *must* to you? Nurse says *must* to me."

"Your papa says *must* to me."

"If you didn't say *yes* when papa said *must*, what would come next?"

"He would say, 'Go out of my house, and never come in again.'"

"And would you do it?"

"I must: the house is his, not mine."

"If *I* didn't say *yes* when papa said *must*, what would happen?"

"He would try to make you say it."

"And if I wouldn't, would he say, 'Go out of my house and never come in again'?"

"No; you are his little girl!"

"Then I think he shouldn't say it to you.—What is your name?"

"Clare."

"Then, Clare, if my papa sends you out of his house, I will go with you.—You wouldn't turn me out, would you, when I was *a little* naughty?"

"No; neither would your papa."

"If he turned you out, it would be all the same. Where you go, I will go. I must, you know! Would you mind if he said 'Go away'?"

"I should be very sorry to leave you."

"Yes, but that's not going to be! Why do you stay with papa? Were you in the house always—ever so long before I saw you?"

"No; a very little while only."

"Did you come in from the street?"

"Yes; I came in from the street. Your papa pays me to work for him."

"And if you wouldn't?"

"Then I should have no money, and nothing to eat, and nowhere to sleep at night."

"Would that make you uncomfable?"

"It would make me die."

"Have you a papa?"

"Yes, but he's far away."

"You could go to him, couldn't you?"

"One day I shall."

"Why don't you go now, and take me?"

"Because he died."

"What's *died?*"

"Went away out of sight, where we can't go to look for him till we go out of sight too."

"When will that be?"

"I don't know."

"Does anybody know?"

"Nobody."

"Then perhaps you will never go?"

"We must go; it's only that nobody knows when."

"I think the when that nobody knows, mayn't never come.—Is that why you have to work?"

"Everybody has to work one way or another."

"I haven't to work!"

"If you don't work when you're old enough, you'll be miserable."

"*You're* not old enough."

"Oh, yes, indeed I am! I've been working a long time now."

"Where? Not for papa?"

"No; not for papa."

"Why not? Why didn't you come sooner? Why didn't you come *much* sooner—*ever* so much sooner? Why did you make me wait for you all the time?"

"Nobody ever told me you were waiting."

"Nobody ever told me you were coming, but I knew."

"You had to wait for me, and you knew. I had to wait for you, and I didn't know! When we have time, I will tell you all about myself, and how I've been waiting too."

"Waiting for me?"

"No."

"Who for?"

"For my father and mother—and somebody else, I think."

"That's me."

"No; I'm waiting yet. I didn't know I was coming to you till I came, and there you were!"

The child was silent for a moment. Then she said thoughtfully,

"You will tell me *all* about yourself! That *will* be nice!—Can you tell stories?" she added. "—Of course you can! You can do *every*thing!"

"Oh, no, I can't!"

"Can't you?"

"No; I can do *some* things—not many. I can love you, little one!—Now I must go, or I shall be late, and nobody ever ought to be late."

"Go then. I will go to my nursery and wait again."

She went down the stair without once looking behind her. Clare followed. On the next floor she went one way to her nursery, and he another to the back-stairs.

One of the causes and signs of Clare's manliness was, that he never aimed at being a man. Many men continue childish because they are always trying to act like men, instead of simply trying to do right. Such never develop true manliness. Clare's manhood stole upon him

unawares. That which at once made him a man and kept him a child, was, that he had no regard for anything but what was real, that is, true.

All the day the thought kept coming, what could he do for the little girl. Perhaps what stirred his feeling for her most, was a suspicion that she was neglected. But the careless treatment of a nurse was better for her than would have been the capricious blandishments and neglects of a mother like Mrs. Shotover. Clare, however, knew nothing yet about Ann's mother. He knew only, by the solemnly still ways of the child, that she must be much left to her own resources, and was wonderfully developed in consequence—whether healthily or not, he could not yet tell. The practical question was—how to contrive to be her occasional companion; how to offer to serve her.

After much thinking, he concluded that he must wait: opportunity might suggest mode; and he would rather find than make opportunity!

CHAPTER LIX.

LOVERS' WALKS.

HE had not long to wait. That very afternoon, going a message for the head-clerk, he met Ann walking with a young lady—who must be Miss Shotover. Neither sister seemed happy with the other. Ann was very white, and so tired that she could but drag her little feet after her. Miss Shotover, flushed with exertion, and annoyed

with her part of nursemaid, held her tight and hauled her along by the hand. She looked good-natured, but not one of the ministering sort. Every now and then she would give the little arm a pull, and say, though not *very* crossly, "Do come along!" The child did not cry, but it was plain she suffered. It was plain also she was doing her best to get home, and avoid rousing her sister's tug.

Keen-sighted, Clare had recognized Ann at some distance, and as he approached had a better opportunity than on the dark stair of seeing what his little friend was like. He saw that her eyes were unusually clear, and, paces away, could distinguish the blue veins on her forehead: she looked even more delicate than he had thought her. The lines of her mouth were straightened out with the painful effort she had to make to keep up with her sister. Her nose continued insignificant, waiting to learn what was expected of it.

For Miss Shotover, there was not a good feature in her face, and even to a casual glance it might have suggested a measure of meanness. But a bright complexion, and the youthful charm which vanishes with youth, are pleasant in their season. Her figure was lithe, and in general she had a look of fun; but at the moment heat and impatience clouded her countenance.

Clare stopped and lifted his hat. Then first the dazed child saw him, for she was short-sighted, and her observation was dulled by weariness. She said not a word, uttered no sound, only drew her hand from her sister's, and held up her arms to her friend—in dumb prayer to be lifted above the thorns of life, and borne along without pain. He caught her up.

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CLARE ASKS MISS SHOTOVER TO LET HIM CARRY ANN HOME.

"I beg your pardon, ma'am," he said, "but the little one and I have met before:—I live in the house, having the honour to be the youngest of your father's clerks. If you will allow me, I will carry the child. She looks tired!"

Miss Shotover was glad enough to be relieved of her clog, and gave smiling consent.

"If you would be so kind as to carry her home," she said, "I should be able to do a little shopping!"

"You will not mind my taking her a little farther first, ma'am? I am on a message for Mr. Woolrige. I will carry her all the way, and be very careful of her."

Miss Shotover was not one to cherish anxiety. She already knew Clare both by report and by sight, and willingly yielded. Saying, with one of her pleasant smiles, that she would hold him accountable for her, she sailed away, like a sloop that had been dragging her anchor, but had now cut her cable. Clare thought what a sweet-looking girl she was—and in truth she was sweet-*looking*. Then all his heart turned to the little one in his arms.

What a walk was that for both of them! Little Ann seemed never to have lived before: she was actually happy! She had been long waiting for Clare, and he was come—and such as she had expected him! It was bliss to glide thus along the busy street without the least exertion, looking down on the heads of the people, safe above danger and fear amid swift-moving things and the crowding confusions of life! To be in Clare's arms was better than being in the little house on the elephant's back in her best picture-book! True, little one! To be in the arms of love, be they ever so weak, is better than

to ride the grandest horse in all the stables of God—and God would have you know it! Never mind your pale little face and your puny nose! While your heart is ready to die for love-sake, you are blessed among women! Only remember that to die of disappointment is not to die either of or for love!

And to Clare, after all those days upon days during which only a dog would come to his arms, what a glory of life it was to have a human child in them, the little heart of the pale face beating against his side! He was not going to forget Abdiel. Abdiel was not a fact to be forgotten. Abdiel was not a doll. Abdiel was not a thing that would not come alive. Abdiel was a true heart, a live soul, and Clare would love him for ever!—not an atom the less that now he had one out upon whom a larger love was able to flow! All true love makes abler to love. It is only false love, the love of those who take their own meanest selfishness, their own pleasure in being loved, for love, that shrinks and narrows the soul.

To the pale-faced, listening child, Clare talked much about the wonderful Abdiel, and about the kind good Miss Tempest who was keeping him to live again at length with his old master; and Ann loved the dog she had never seen, because the dog loved the Clare who was come at last.

When they returned, Clare rang the house-bell, and gave up his charge to the man who opened the door. Without word or tone, gesture or look of objection, or even of disinclination, the child submitted to be taken from Clare's loving embrace, and carried to a nurse who was neither glad nor sorry to see her.

He had been so long gone that Mr. Woolrige found fault with him for it. Clare told him he had met Miss Shotover with her sister, and the child seemed so tired he had asked leave to carry her with him. Mr. Woolrige was not pleased, but he said nothing; on the spot the clerks nicknamed him *Nursie;* and Clare did his best to justify the appellation: he never lost a chance of acting up to it, and always answered when they summoned him by it.

Before the week was ended, he sought an interview with Miss Shotover, and asked her whether he might not take little Ann out for a walk whenever the evening was fine. For at five o'clock the doors of the bank were shut, and in half an hour after he was free. Miss Shotover said she saw no objection, and would tell the nurse to have her ready as often as the weather was fit; whereupon Clare left her with a gratitude far beyond any degree of that emotion by her conceivable. The nurse, on her part, was willing to gratify Clare, and not sorry to be rid of the child, who was not one, indeed, to interest any ordinary woman.

The summer came and was peculiarly fine, and almost every evening Clare might be seen taking his pleasure—neither like bank-clerk nor like nurse-maid, for always he had little Ann in his arms, or was leading her along with care and entire attention: he never let her walk except on entreaty, and not always then. To his fellow clerks this proof of an utter lack of dignity seemed consistent with his origin—of which they knew nothing; they knew only his late position. To themselves they were fine gentlemen with cigars in their mouths, and he was a lackey to the bone! To himself Clare was the

lover of a child; and about them he did not think. Theirs was the life of a town; Clare's was a life of the universe.

The pair came speedily to understand and communicate like twin brother and sister. Clare, as he carried her, always knew when Ann wanted a change of position; Ann always knew when Clare began to grow weary—knew before Clare himself—and would insist on walking. Neither could remember how it came, but it grew a custom that, when they walked hand in hand, Clare told her stories of his life and adventures; when he carried her, he told her fairy-tales, which he could spin like a spider: she preferred the former.

So neither bank nor nursery was any longer dreary.

At length came the gray, brooding winter, causing red fingers and aches and chilblains. But it was not unfriendly to little Ann. True, she was not permitted to go out in the evening any more, but Clare, with the help of the cook, devoted to her his dinner-hour instead. It was no hardship to eat from a basket in place of a table, to one who never troubled himself as to the kind, quality, or quantity of his food itself. He had learned, like a good soldier, to endure hardness. I have heard him say that never did he enjoy a dinner more than when, in those homeless days of his boyhood, he tore the flakes off a loaf fresh from the baker's oven, and ate them as he walked along the street. The old highlanders of Scotland were trained to think it the part of a gentleman not to mind what he ate—sign of scant civilization, no doubt, in the eyes of some who now occupy but do not fill their place—as time will show, when the call is for men to fight, not to eat.

CHAPTER LX.

THE SHOE-BLACK.

THE head-clerk, while he had not a word against him, as he confessed to Mr. Shotover, yet thought Clare would never make a man of business. When pressed to say on what he grounded the opinion, he could only answer that the lad did not seem to have his heart in it. But if, to be a man of business, it is not enough to do one's duty scrupulously, but the very heart must be in it, then is there something wrong with business. The heart fares as its treasure: who would be content his heart should fare as not a few sorts of treasure must? Mr. Woolrige passed no such judgment, however, upon certain older young men in the bank, whose hearts certainly were not in the business, but even worse posited.

One cold, miserable day, at once damp and frosty, on which it was quite unfit to take Ann out, Clare, having eaten a hasty dinner, and followed it with a walk, was returning through the town in good time for the recommencement of business, when he came upon a little boy, at the corner of a street, blowing his fingers, and stumping up and down the pavement to keep his blood moving while he waited for a job: his brushes lay on the top of his blacking-box on the curbstone. Clare saw that he was both hungry and cold—states of sensation with which he was far too familiar to look on the signs of them with indifference. To give him something to do, and so something to eat, he went to his block and put

his foot on it. The boy bustled up, snatched at his brushes, and began operations. But, whether from the coldness or incapacity of his hands, Clare soon saw that his boots would not be polished that afternoon.

"You don't seem quite up to your business, my boy!" he said. "What's the matter?"

The boy made no answer, but went on with his vain attempt. A moment more, and Clare saw a tear fall on the boot he was at work upon.

"This won't do!" said Clare. "Let me look at *your* boots."

The boy stood up, wiping his eyes with the back of his hand.

"Ah!" said Clare, "I don't wonder you can't polish my boots, when you don't care to polish your own!"

"Please, sir," answered the boy, "it's Jim as does it! He's down wi' the measles, an' I ain't up to it."

"Look here, then! I'll give you a lesson," said Clare. "Many's the boot I've blacked. Up with your foot! I'll soon show you how the thing's done!"

"Please, sir," objected the boy, "there ain't enough boot left to take a polish!"

"We'll see about that!" returned Clare. "Put it up. I've worn worse in my time."

The boy obeyed. The boot was very bad, but there was enough leather to carry some blacking, and the skin took the rest.

Clare was working away, growing pleasantly hot with the quick, sharp motion, while two of his fellow clerks were strolling up on the other side of the corner, who had been having more with their lunch than was good for them. Swinging round, they came upon a well

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CLARE IS FOUND GIVING THE SHOEBLACK A LESSON

dressed youth brushing a ragged boy's boots. It was an odd sight, and one of them, whose name was Marway, thought to get some fun out of the phenomenon.

"Here!" he cried, "I want my boots brushed."

Clare rose to his feet, saying,

"Brush the gentleman's boots. I will finish yours after, and then you shall finish mine."

"Hullo, Nursie! it's you turned boot-black, is it?—Nice thing for the office, Jack!" remarked Marway, who was the finest gentleman, and the lowest blackguard among the clerks.

He put his foot on the block. The boy began his task, but did no better with his boots than he had done with Clare's.

"Soul of an ass!" cried Marway, "are you going to keep my foot there till it freezes to the block? Why don't you do as Nursie tells you? *He* knows how to brush a boot! *You* ain't worth your salt! You ain't fit to black a donkey's hoofs!"

"Give me the brushes, my boy," said Clare.

The boy rose abashed, and obeyed. After a few of Clare's light rapid strokes, the boots looked very different.

"Bravo, Nursie!" cried Marway. "There ain't a flunkey of you all could do it better!"

Clare said nothing, finished the job, and stood up. Marway, turning on the other heel as he set his foot down, said, "Thank you, Nursie!" and was walking off.

"Please, Mr. Marway, give the boy his penny," said Clare.

But Marway wanted to *take a rise out of* Clare.

"The fool did nothing for me!" he answered. "He made my boot worse than it was."

"It was I did nothing for you, Mr. Marway," rejoined Clare. "What I did, I did for the boy."

"Then let the boy pay you!" said Marway.

The shoe-black went into a sudden rage, caught up one of his brushes, and flung it at Marway as he turned. It struck him on the side of the head. Marway swore, stalked up to Clare and knocked him down, then strode away with a grin.

The shoe-black sent his second brush whizzing past his ear, but he took no notice. Clare got up, little the worse, only bruised.

"See what comes of doing things in a passion!" he said, as the boy came back with the brushes he had hastened to secure. "Here's your penny! Put up your foot."

The boy did as he was told, but kept foaming out rage at the bloke that had refused him his penny, and knocked down his friend. It did not occur to him that he was himself the cause of the outrage, and that his friend had suffered for him. Clare's head ached a good deal, but he polished the boy's boots. Then he made him try again on his boots, when, warmed by his rage, he did a little better. Clare gave him another penny, and went to the bank.

Marway was not there, nor did he show himself for a day or two. Clare said nothing about what had taken place, neither did the others.

CHAPTER LXI.

A WALK WITH CONSEQUENCES.

CLARE had been in the bank more than a year, and not yet had Mr. Shotover discovered why he did not quite trust him. Had Clare known he did not, he

would have wondered that he trusted him with such a precious thing as his little Ann. But was his child very precious to Mr. Shotover? When a man's heart is in his business, that is, when he is set on making money, some precious things are not so precious to him as they might be—among the rest, the living God and the man's own life. He would pass Clare and the child without even a nod to indicate approval, or a smile for the small woman. He had, I presume, sufficient regard for the inoffensive little thing to be content she should be happy, therefore did not interfere with what his clerks counted so little to the honour of the bank. But although, as I have said, he still doubted Clare, true eyes in whatever head must have perceived that the child was in charge of an angel. The countenance of Clare with Ann in his arms, was so peaceful, so radiant of simple satisfaction, that surely there were some in that large town who, seeing them, thought of the angels that do alway behold the face of the Father in heaven.

One evening in the early summer, when they had resumed their walks after five o'clock, they saw, in a waste place, where houses had been going to be built for the last two years, a number of caravans drawn up in order.

A rush of hope filled the heart of Clare: what if it should be the menagerie he knew so well! And, sure enough, there was Mr. Halliwell superintending operations! But if Glum Gunn were about, he might find it awkward with the child in his arms! Gunn might not respect even her! Besides he ought to ask leave to take her! He would carry her home first, and come again to see his third mother and all his old friends, with Pummy and the lion and the rest of the creatures.

Little Ann was eager to know what those curious houses on wheels were. Clare told her they were like

her Noah's ark, full of beasts, only real, live beasts, not beasts made of bits of stick. She became at once eager to see them—the more eager that her contempt of things like life that wouldn't come alive had been growing stronger ever since she threw her doll out of the window. Clare told her he could not take her without first asking leave. This puzzled her: Clare was her highest authority.

"But if *you* take me?" she said.

"Your papa and mamma might not like me to take you."

"But I'm yours!"

"Yes, you're mine—but not so much," he added with a sigh, "as theirs!"

"Ain't I?" she rejoined, in a tone of protesting astonishment mingled with grief, and began to wriggle, wanting to get down.

Clare set her down, and would have held her, as usual, by the hand, but she would not let him. She stood with her eyes on the ground, and her little gray face looking like stone. It frightened Clare, and he remained a moment silent, reviewing the situation.

"You see, little one," he said at length, "you were theirs before I came! You were sent to them. You are their own little girl, and we must mind what they would like!"

"It was only till you came!" she argued. "They don't care *very* much for me. Ask them, please, to sell me to you. I don't think they would want much money for me! How many shillings do you think I am worth, Clare? Not many, I hope!—Six?"

"You are worth more than all the money in your papa's bank," answered Clare, looking down at her lovingly.

The child's face fell.

"Am I?" she said. "I'm so sorry! I didn't know I was worth so much!—and not yours!" she added, with a sigh that seemed to come from the very heart of her being. "Then you're not able to buy me?"

"No, indeed, little one!" answered Clare. "Besides, papas don't sell their little girls!"

"Oh, yes, they do! Gus said so to Trudie!"

Clare knew that *Trudie* meant her sister Gertrude.

"Who is Gus?" he asked.

"Trudie calls him Gus. I don't know more name to him. Perhaps they call him something else in the bank."

"Oh! he's in the bank, is he?" returned Clare. "Then I think I know him."

"He said it to her one night in my nursery. Jane went down; I was in my crib. They talked such a long time! I tried to go to sleep, but I couldn't. I heard all what he said to her. It wasn't half so nice as what you talk to me!"

This was not pleasant news to Clare. Augustus Marway was, if half the tales of him were true, no fit person for his master's daughter to be intimate with! He had once heard Mr. Shotover speak about gambling in such terms of disapprobation as he had never heard him use about anything else; and it was well known in the bank that Marway was in the company of gamblers almost every night. He was so troubled, that at first he wished the child had not told him. For what was he to do? Could it be right to let the thing go on? Clare felt sure Mr. Shotover either did not know that Marway gambled, or did not know that he talked in the nursery with his daughter. But, alas, he could do nothing without telling, and they all said none but the lowest of cads would carry tales! For the young men thought it the part of

gentlemen *to stick by each other*, and hide from Mr. Shotover some things he had a right to know. But Clare saw that, whatever they might think, he must act in the matter. Little Ann wondered that he scarcely spoke to her all the way home. But she did not say anything, for she too was troubled: she did not belong to Clare so much as she had thought she did!

Clare reflected also as he went, how much he owed Ann's sister for letting him have the little one. She had always spoken to him kindly too, and never seemed, like the clerks, to look down upon him because he had been a page-boy—though, he thought, if they were to be as often hungry as he had been, they would be glad to be page-boys themselves! For himself, he liked to be a page-boy! He would do anything for Miss Tempest! And he must do what he could for Miss Shotover! It would be wicked to let her marry a man that was wicked! He had himself seen him drunk! Would it be fair, knowing she did not know, not to tell? Would it not be helping to hurt her? Was he to be a coward and fear being called bad names? Was he, for the sake of the good opinion of rascals, to take care of the rascal, and let the lady take care of herself? There was this difficulty, however, that he could assert nothing beyond having seen him drunk!

He carried Ann to the nursery, and set out for the menagerie. When he knocked at the door of the house-caravan, Mrs. Halliwell opened it, stared hardly an instant, threw her arms round his neck, and kissed him.

"Come in, come in, my boy!" she said. "It makes me a happy woman to see you again. I've been just miserable over what might have befallen you, and me with all that money of yours! I've got it by me safe, ready for you! I lie awake nights and fancy Gunn has got hold of you, and made away with you; then fall asleep and am

sure of it. He's been gone several times, a looking for you, I know! I think he's afraid of you; I know he hates you. Mind you keep out of his sight; he'll do you a mischief if he has the chance. He's the same as ever, a man to make life miserable."

"I've never done him wrong," said Clare, "and I'm not going to keep out of his way as if I were afraid of him! I mean to come and see the animals to-morrow."

A great deal more passed between them. They had their tea together. Mr. Halliwell, who did not care for tea, came and went several times, and now the night was dark. Then they spoke again of Gunn.

"Well, I don't think he'll venture to interfere with you," said Mrs. Halliwell, "except he happens to be drunk.—But what's that talking? *We're* all quiet for the night. Listen."

For some time Clare had been conscious of the whispered sounds of a dialogue somewhere near, but had paid no attention. The voices were now plainer than at first. When his mother told him to listen, he did, and thought he had heard one of them before. It was peculiar—that of an old Jew whom he had seen several times at the bank. As the talking went on, he began to think he knew the other voice also. It was that of Augustus Marway. The two fancied themselves against a caravan full of wild beasts.

Marway was the son of the port-admiral, who, late in life, married a silly woman. She died young, but not before she had ruined her son, whose choice company was the least respectable of the officers who came ashore from the king's ships.

He had of late been playing deeper and having worse luck; and had borrowed until no one would lend him a single sovereign more. His father knew, in a vague way,

how he was going on, and had nearly lost hope of his reformation. Having yet large remains of a fine physical constitution, he seldom failed to appear at the bank in the morning—if not quite in time, yet within the margin of lateness that escaped rebuke. Mr. Shotover was a connection by marriage, which gave Marway the privilege of being regarded by Miss Shotover as a cousin—a privilege with desirable possibilities contingent, making him anxious to retain the good opinion of his employer.

Clare heard but a portion here and there of the conversation going on outside the wooden wall; but it was plain nevertheless that Marway was pressing a creditor to leave him alone until he was married, when he would pay every shilling he owed him.

The young fellow had a persuasive tongue, and boasted he could get the better of even a Jew. Clare heard the money-lender grant him a renewal for three months, when, if Marway did not pay, or were not the accepted suitor of the lady whose fortune was to redeem him, his creditor would take his course.

The moment he perceived they were about to part, Clare hastened from the caravan, and went along the edge of the waste ground, so as to meet Marway on his road back to the town: at the corner of it they came jump together. Marway started when Clare addressed him. Seeing, then, who claimed his attention, he drew himself up.

"Well?" he said.

"Mr. Marway,' began Clare, "I heard a great deal of what passed between you and old Lewin."

Marway used worse than vulgar language at times, and he did so now, ending with the words,

"A spy! a sneaking spy! Would you like to lick my boot? By Jove, you shall know the taste of it!"

"Nobody minds being overheard who hasn't something to conceal! If I had low secrets I would not stand up against the side of a caravan when I wanted to talk about them. I was inside. Not to hear you I should have had to stop my ears."

"Why didn't you, then, you low-bred flunkey?"

"Because I had heard of you what made it my duty to listen."

Marway cursed his insolence, and asked what he was doing in such a place. He would report him, he said.

"What I was doing is my business," answered Clare. "Had I known you for an honest man I would not have listened to yours. I should have had no right."

"You tell me to my face I'm a swindler!" said Marway between his teeth, letting out a blow at Clare, which he cleverly dodged.

"I do!"

"I don't know what you mean, but bitterly shall you repent your insolence, you prying rascal! This is your sweet revenge for a blow you had not the courage to return!—to dog me and get hold of my affairs! You cur! You're going to turn informer next, of course, and bear false witness against your neighbour! You shall repent it, I swear!"

"Will it be bearing false witness to say that Miss Shotover does not know the sort of man who wants to marry her? Does she know why he wants to marry her? Does her father know that you are in the clutches of a money-lender?"

Marway caught hold of Clare and threatened to kill him. Clare did not flinch, and he calmed down a little.

"What do you want to square it?" he growled.

"I don't understand you," returned Clare.

"What's the size of your tongue-plaster?"

"I don't know much slang."

"What bribe will silence you then? I hope that is plain enough—even for *your* comprehension!"

"If I had meant to hold my tongue, I should have held it."

"What do you want, then?"

"To keep you from marrying Miss Shotover."

"By Jove! And suppose I kick you into the gutter, and tell you to mind your own business—what then?"

"I will tell either your father or Mr. Shotover all about it."

"Even you can't be such a fool! What good would it do you? You're not after her yourself, are you?—Ha! ha!—that's it! I didn't nose that!—But come, hang it! where's the *use?*—I'll give you four flimsies—there! Twenty pounds, you idiot! There!"

"Mr. Marway, nothing will make me hold my tongue—not even your promise to drop the thing."

"Then what made you come and cheek me? Impudence?"

"Not at all! I should have been glad enough not to have to do it! I came to you for my own sake."

"That of course!"

"I came because I would do nothing underhand!"

"What are you going to do next, then?"

"I am going to tell Mr. Shotover, or Admiral Marway—I haven't yet made up my mind which."

"What are you going to tell them?"

"That old Lewin has given you three months to get engaged to Miss Shotover, or take the consequences of not being able to pay what you owe him."

"And you don't count it underhand to carry such a tale?"

"I do not. It would have been if I hadn't told you first. I would tell Miss Shotover, only, if she be anything of a girl, she wouldn't believe me."

"I should think not! Come, come, be reasonable! I

always thought you a good sort of fellow, though I *was* rough on you, I confess. There! take the money, and leave me my chance."

"No. I will save the lady if I can. She shall at least know the sort of man you are."

"Then it's war to the knife, is it?"

"I mean to tell the truth about you."

"Then do your worst. You shall black my boots again."

"If I do, I shall have the penny first."

"You cringing flunkey!"

"I haven't cringed to you, Mr. Marway!"

Marway tried to kick him, failed, and strode into the dark between him and the lamps of the town.

CHAPTER LXII.

THE CAGE OF THE PUMA.

MARWAY was a fine, handsome fellow, whose manners, where he saw reason, soon won him favour, and two of the young men in the office were his ready slaves. Every moment of the next day Clare was watched. Marway had laid his plans, and would forestall frustration. Clare could hardly do anything before the dinner-hour, but Marway would make assurance double sure.

At anchor in the roads lay a certain frigate, whose duty it was to sail round the islands, like a duck about her floating brood. Among the young officers on board were two with whom Marway was intimate. He had met them the night before, and they had together laid a plot for nullifying Clare's interference with Marway's scheme —which his friends also had reason to wish successful, for

Marway owed them both money. Clare had come in the way of all three.

Now little Ann was a guardian cherub to the object of their enmity, and he and she must first of all be separated. Clare had asked leave of Miss Shotover to take the child to Noah's ark, as she called it, that evening, and Marway had learned it from her: Clare's going would favour their plan, but the child's presence would render it impracticable.

One thing in their favour was, that Mr. Shotover was from home. If Clare had resolved on telling him rather than the admiral, he could not until the next evening, and that would give them abundant time. On the other hand, having him watched, they could easily prevent him from finding the admiral. But Clare had indeed come to the just conclusion that his master had the first right to know what he had to tell. His object was not the exposure of Marway, but the protection of his master's daughter: he would, therefore, wait Mr. Shotover's return. He said to himself also, that Marway would thereby have a chance to bethink himself, and, like Hamlet's uncle, "try what repentance can."

As soon as he had put the bank in order for the night, he went to find his little companion, and take her to Noah's ark. The child had been sitting all the morning and afternoon in a profound stillness of expectation; but the hour came and passed, and Clare did not appear.

"You never, never, never came," she said to him afterward. "I had to go to bed, and the beasts went away."

It was many long weeks before she told him this, or her solemn little visage smiled again.

He went to the little room off the hall, where he almost always found her waiting for him, dressed to go. She was not there. Nobody came. He grew impatient, and ran

in his eagerness up the front stair. At the top he met the butler coming from the drawing-room—a respectable old man, who had been in the family as long as his master.

"Pardon me, Mr. Porson," said the butler, who was especially polite to Clare, recognizing in him the ennoblement of his own order, "but it is against the rules for any of the gentlemen below to come up this staircase."

"I know I'm in the wrong," answered Clare; "but I was in such a hurry I ventured this once. I've been waiting for Miss Ann twenty minutes."

"If you will go down, I will make inquiry, and let you know directly," replied the butler.

Clare went down, and had not waited more than another minute when the butler brought the message that the child was not to go out. In vain Clare sought an explanation; the old man knew nothing of the matter, but confessed that Miss Shotover seemed a little put out.

Then Clare saw that his desire to do justice had thwarted his endeavour: Marway had seen Miss Shotover, he concluded, and had so thoroughly prejudiced her against anything he might say, that she had already taken the child from him! He repented that he had told him his purpose before he was ready to follow it up with immediate action. Distressed at the thought of little Ann's disappointment, he set out for the show, glad in the midst of his grief, that he was going to see Pummy once more.

The weather had been a little cloudy all day, but as he left the closer part of the town, the vaporous vault gave way, and the west revealed a glorious sunset. Troubled for the trouble of little Ann, Clare seemed drawn into the sunset. The splendour said to him: "Go on; sorrow is but a cloud. Do the work given you to do, and the clouds will keep moving; stop your work and the clouds will settle down hard."

"When I was on the tramp," thought Clare, "I always went on, and that's how I came here. If I hadn't gone on, I should never have found the darling!"

As little as during any day's tramp did he know how his reflection was going to be justified.

He wandered on, and the minutes passed slowly: it was wandering now with no child in his arms! He was in no haste to go to the menagerie; he would be in good time for the beasts; and the later he was, the sooner he would see his mother alone and have a talk with her!

At last, it being now quite dark, he turned, and made for the caravans.

A crowd was going up the steps, passing Mrs. Halliwell slowly, and descending into the area surrounded by the beasts. Clare went up, and laid his money on the little white table. The good woman took it with a smile, threw it in her wooden bowl, and handed him, as if it had been his change, three bright sovereigns. Clare turned his face away. He could not take them. He felt as if it would break one bond between them.

"The money's your own!" she said, in a low voice.

"By and by, mother!" he answered.

"No, no, take it now," she insisted, in an almost angry whisper; but the same moment threw the sovereigns among the silver, and some coppers that lay on the table over them.

Judging by her look that he had better say nothing, he turned and went down the steps. Before he reached the bottom of them, Glum Gunn elbowed his way past him, throwing a scowl on him from his ugly eyes at the range of a few inches.

The place was fuller than it had been all the evening, and with a rougher sort of company. The show would close in about an hour. It seemed to Clare not so well

lighted as usual. Perhaps that was why he did not observe that he was watched and followed by Marway, with two others, and one burly, middle-aged, sailor-looking fellow. But I doubt whether he would have seen them in any light, for he had no suspicions, and was not ready to analyze a crowd and distinguish individuals.

He avoided making straight for Pummy, contenting himself for the moment with an occasional glimpse of him between the moving heads, now opening a vista, now closing it again, for he hoped to get gradually nearer unseen, so as to be close to the animal when first he should descry him, for he dreaded attracting attention by becoming, while yet at a distance, the object of an uproarious outbreak of affection on the part of the puma.

But while he was yet a good way from him, a most ferocious yell sprang full grown into the air, which the very fibres of his body knew as one of the cries of the puma when most enraged. There he was on his hind legs, ramping against the front of the cage, every hair on him bristling, his tail lashing his flanks. The same instant arose a commotion in the crowd behind Clare, a pushing and stooping and swaying to and fro, with shouts of, "Here he is! here he is!"

Filled with a foreboding that was almost a prescience, he fell to forcing his way without ceremony, and had got a little nearer to the puma, when, elbowing roughly through the spectators, with red, evil face, in drink but not drunk, Glum Gunn appeared, almost between him and the cage—once more, to the horror of Clare, holding by the neck his poor little Abdiel, curled up into the shape of a flea. The brute was making his way with him to the cage of the puma, whose wrath, grown to an indescribable frenzy, now blazed point-blank at the dog.

I think some waft of the wild odour of the menagerie

must have reached the nostrils of the loving creature, brought back old times and his master, and waked the hope of finding him. That he had but just arrived was plain, for he had not had time to get to his master.

Clare was almost at the edge of the close-packed, staring crowd, absorbed in the sight of the huge raving cat. Breaking through its outermost ring in the strength of sudden terror, he darted to the cage to reach it before Glum Gunn. A man crossed and hustled him. Gunn opened the door of the cage, and flung Abdiel to the puma. Ere he could close it, Clare struck him once more a stout left-hander on the side of his head. Gunn staggered back. Clare sprang into the cage—just as Pummy spying him uttered a jubilant roar of recognition. His jumping into the cage just prevented the puma from getting out, and the crowd from trampling each other to death to escape The Christians' Friend; but now that Clare was in, the cage-door might have swung all night open unheeded—so long, that is, as no dog appeared.

As for Abdiel the puma had forgotten him: the dog was out of his sight for the moment, though only behind him, while his friend and he were rubbing recognizant noses. Abdiel showed his wisdom by keeping in the background. The moment he was flung into the cage, he had got into a corner of it, and stood up on his hind legs.

His master believed that, knowing how the puma loved the human form divine, he thought to prejudice him in his favour by showing how near he could come to it. There he yet stood, his head sunk on his chest, watching out of his eyes for the terrible moment when his enemy should again catch sight of him.

The moment came. The puma's delight had broken out in wildest motion. He sprang to the roof of his cage, and grappling there, looked down with retorted neck, and saw

the dog. Poor Abdiel immediately raised his head, and in hope of propitiation all but forlorn, began a little dance his master had taught him.

What Pummy would have done with him, I fear, but I cannot tell. Clare sprang to the rescue, and the weight of the puma's bulk descended, not on Abdiel, but on the shoulders of Clare who had the dog in his bosom. In a moment more it was evidenced that a common love, however often the cause of jealousy, is the most powerful mediator between the generous. The puma forgot his hate, the dog forgot his fear, and presently, to the admiration of the crowd, Clare and Pummy and Abby were rolling over and over each other on the floor of the cage.

Pummy had the best of the rough game. One moment he would be a bend in a seemingly unloosable knot of confused animality, the next he would be clinging to the top of his cage, where the others could not follow him. Perhaps to have a human to play with, was even better than dreams of loveliest frolics with brothers and sisters, and a mother as madly merry as they, in still, moonlit nights among the rocks, where neither sound nor scent of horse woke the devil in any of their bosoms!

Glum Gunn, too angry to speak, stood watching with a scowl fit for Lucifer when he rose from his first fall from heaven. He could do nothing! If he touched one, all three would be upon him! Experience had taught him what the puma would do in defence of Clare! He must bide his time!—But he must keep hold of his chance! He drew from his pocket his master-key, and at a moment when Clare was under the other two, slid it into the key-hole, and locked the door of the cage. He had him now —and his beast of a dog too! If he could have turned the puma mad, and made him tear them both to shreds, he would not have delayed an instant. But he must

think! He must say, like Hamlet, "About, my brains!"

The man, however, who wishes to do evil, will find as ready helpers as he who wishes to do well: in the place were those who wanted Gunn's aid, and would give him theirs.

He felt a touch on his arm, glanced sullenly round, and saw a face under whose beauty lay the devil. Marway, with eye and thumb, requested him to withdraw for a moment, and he did not hesitate. As he went he chuckled to himself at the thought of Clare when he found the door locked.

Marway's three accomplices had drifted off one by one to wait him outside: he rejoined them with Gunn; and, retiring a little way from the caravans, the five held a council, the results of which make an important part of Clare's history.

Clare seemed absorbed in his game with his four-footed, one-tailed friends, but he was wide awake: he had Abdiel to deliver, and kept, therefore, all the time, at least half an eye on Glum Gunn. He saw Marway come up to him, and saw them retire together: it was the very moment to leave the cage with Abdiel! He rose, not without difficulty, because of the jumping of his playmates upon him and over him, and went to the door.

The moment he did so, the crowd was greatly amused to see the puma turn upon the dog with a snarl, and the dog, at the fearful sound of altered mood, immediately put on the man, rise to one pair of feet, and begin to dance. The puma turned from him, went to the heel of his chosen master, and there stood.

In vain Clare endeavoured to open the gate. He had never known it locked, and could not think when it had been done. At length, amid the laughter of the spectators, he desisted, and the three resumed their frolics.

At this the admiration of the visitors broke out. They

had seen the door made fast, and had kept pretty quiet, waiting what would come: they had thus earned their amusement when he sought in vain to open it. When his withdrawal confessed him foiled, the merrier began to mock and the ruder to jeer. But when they saw him laugh, and all three return to their gambols, they applauded heartily.

Just before this last portion of the entertainment, Mr. Halliwell, who had been looking on for a while, retired, not knowing the cage-door was locked. He went to his wife and said, that, if they had but the boy and his dog again, and were but free of that brother of his, the menagerie would be a wild-beast paradise. He would have had her go and see the pranks in the puma's cage, but she was too tired, she said; so he strolled out with his pipe, and left his men to close the exhibition. Mrs. Halliwell fastened her door and went to bed, a little hurt that Clare did not come to her.

Gradually the folk thinned away; and at last only a few who had got in at half-price remained. To them the attendants hinted that they were going to shut shop, and one by one they shuffled out, the readier that Clare was now so tired that Pummy could not get up the merest tail of a lark more. He was quite fresh himself, and had he been out in the woods, would certainly not have gone home till morning. But he was such a human creature that he would not insist when he saw Clare was weary; and that he had no inclination to play with Abdiel when his master was out of the game, was quite as well for Abdiel, for Pummy might have forgot himself. When Abby, not free from fear, as knowing well he was not free from danger, crept to his master's bosom, Pummy gave a low growl, and shoving his nose under the long body of the dog, with one jerk threw him a yard off

upon the floor, whence Abdiel returned to content himself with his master's feet, abandoning the place of honour to one who knew himself stronger, and probably counted himself better. So they all fell asleep in peace. For although Clare knew himself and Abdiel Gunn's prisoners, he feared no surprise with two such rousable companions.

CHAPTER LXIII.

THE DOME OF THE ANGELS.

WHEN Clare awoke, he knew he had been asleep a long time. It was, notwithstanding, quite dark, and there was something wrong with him. His head ached: it had never ached before. He put out his hands: Pummy's hairy body was nowhere near. He called Abdiel: no whimper answered; no cold nose was thrust into his hand. He had gone to sleep, surely between his two friends! Could he have only dreamed it?

Why was the darkness so thick? There must surely be light in the clouds by this time! He felt half awake and half dreaming.

What was the curious motion he grew aware of? Was something trying to keep him asleep, or was something trying to wake him? Had they put him in a big cradle? Were they heaving him about to rouse him? Or could it be a gentle earthquake that was rocking him to and fro? Would it wake up in earnest presently, and pull and push, and shake and rattle, until the dome of the angels came shivering down upon him?

Where was he? Not on the hard floor of Pummy's cage, but on something much harder—like iron. Was he in the wagon in which they carried the things for setting

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CLARE ASLEEP IN THE PUMA'S CAGE

up the show? Something had happened to him, and his mother was taking him with her! But in that case he would be lying softer! *She* would not have given him a bed so full of aches!

What would they think at the bank? What would little Ann think if he came to her no more?

He could not be in a caravan; the motion was much too smooth and pleasant for that!

He put his hand to his face: what was it wet on his cheek? It did not feel nice; it felt like blood! Had he had a blow on the head? Was that what gave him this headache? He felt his head all over, but could find no hurt.

Why was he lying like a log, wondering and wondering, instead of getting up and seeing what it all meant? It must be the darkness and the headache that kept him down! The place was very close! He *must* get out of it!

He tried to get on his feet, but as he rose, his head struck something, and he dropped back. He got again on his knees and groped about. On all sides he was closed in. But he was not shut in a dungeon of stone. He seemed to be in a great wooden box—small enough to be a box, much too large for a coffin. Could it be one of the oubliettes in the roof of the doge's palace at Venice? He laughed at the idea, for the motion continued, the gentle earthquake that seemed trying to rock him to sleep: the doge's palace could hardly be afloat on the grand canal!

What could it all mean? What would little Ann do without him? She would not cry: she never cried—at least, he had never seen her cry! but that would not make it easier for her!

What had become of Abdiel? Had Glum Gunn got him? Then the wet on his face was Abdiel's blood—shed

in his defence, perhaps, when his enemies were taking him away!

Fears and anxieties, such as he had never known before, began to crowd upon him—not for himself; he was not made to think of himself, either first or second. Something dreadful might be going on that he could not prevent! He had never been so miserable. It was high time to do something—to ask the great one somewhere, he did not know where, who could somehow, he did not know how, hear the thoughts that were not words, to do what ought to be done for little Ann, and Abdiel, and Pummy! He prayed in his heart, lay still, and fell fast asleep.

He came to himself again, in the act of drawing a deep breath of cool, delicious air. He was no longer shut in the dark, stifling box. He was coming alive! A comforting wind blew all about him. It was like a live thing putting its own life into him. But his eyelids were heavy; he was unable to open them.

All at once they opened of themselves.

The dome of the angels had come down and closed in round him, but bringing room for him, taking none away. It was blue, and filled with the loveliest white clouds, possessed by a blowing wind that never was able to blow them away. They were of strangely regular shapes; not the less were they alive—piled one above the other, up and up—up ever so high! They all kept their places, and some had the loveliest blue shadows upon them, which glided about a little. But the dome of the angels rose high, and ever higher still, above them. The dome of the angels was at home, and the clouds were at home in it. He gazed entranced at the sight. Then came a sudden strong heave and roll of the earthquake, and a light shone in his eyes that blinded him.

It was but the strong friendly sun. When Clare opened his eyes again, he knew that he was lying on the deck of one of the great ships he had so frequently looked at from the shore. Oh, how often had he not longed after this one and that one of them, as if in some one somewhere, perhaps in that one, lay something he could not do without, which yet he could never set his eyes, not to say his hands upon. He had his heart's desire, and what was to come of it? He lay on the ship, and the ship lay on the sea, a little world afloat on the water, moving as a planet moves through the heavens, but carrying her own heaven with her, attended by her own clouds, bearing her whither she would. Up into those clouds he lay gazing, up into the dome of the angels, drawing deeper and deeper breaths of gladness, too happy to think—when a foot came with a kick in the ribs, and a voice ordered him to get up: was he going to lie there till the frigate was paid off?

CHAPTER LXIV.

THE PANTHER.

CLARE scrambled to his feet, and surveyed the man who had thus roused him. He had a vague sense of having seen him before, but could not remember where. Feeling faint, and finding himself beside a gun, he leaned upon it.

The sailor regarded him with an insolent look.

"Wake up," he said, "an' come along to the cap'n. What's the service a comin' to, I should like to know, when a beggarly shaver like you has the cheek to stow hisself away on board one o' his majesty's frigates!

Wouldn' nothin' less suit your highness than a berth on the Panther?"

"Is that the name of the ship?" asked Clare.

"Yes, that's the name of the ship!" returned the man, mimicking him. "You'll have the Panther, his mark, on the back o' *you* presently! Come along, I say, to the cap'n! We ha' got to ask *him* what's to be done wi' rascals as rob their masters, an' then stow theirselves away on board his majesty's ships!"

"Take me to the captain," said Clare.

The man seemed for a moment to doubt whether there might not be some mistake: he had expected to see him cringe. But he took him by the collar behind, and pushed him along to the quarter-deck, where an elderly officer was pacing up and down alone.

"Well, Tom," said the captain, stopping in his walk, "what's the matter? Who's that you've got?"

"Please yer honour," answered the boatswain, giving Clare a shove, "this here's a stowaway in his majesty's ship, Panther. I found him snug in the cable-tier.—Salute the captain, you beggar!"

Clare had no cap to lift, but he bowed like the gentleman he was. The captain stood looking at him. Clare returned his gaze, and smiled. A sort of tremble, much like that in the level air on a hot summer day, went over the captain's face, and he looked harder at Clare.

A sound arose like the purring of an enormous cat, and, sure enough, it was nothing else: chained to the foot of the forward binnacle stood a panther, a dark yellow creature with black spots, bigger than Pummy, swinging his tail. Clare turned at the noise he made. The panther made a bound and a leap to the height and length of his chain, and uttered a cry like a musical yawn. Clare stretched out his arms, and staggered toward him. The

next moment the animal had him. The captain darted to the rescue. But the beast was only licking him wherever there was a bare spot to lick; and Clare wondered to find how many such spots there were: he was in rags! The panther kept tossing him over and over as if he were a baby, licking as he tossed, and in his vibrating body and his whole behaviour manifested an exceeding joy. The captain stood staring "like one that hath been stunned."

The boatswain was not astonished: he had seen Clare at home among wild animals, and thought the panther was taken with the wild-beast smell about him.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Clare, rolling himself out of the panther's reach, and rising to his feet, "but wild things like me, somehow! I slept with a puma last night. He and this panther, sir, would have a terrible fight if they met!"

The captain threw a look of disappointment at the panther.

"Go forward, Tom," he said.

The man did not like the turn things had taken, and as he went wore something of the look of one doomed to make the acquaintance of another kind of cat.

"What made you come on board this ship, my lad?" asked the captain, in a voice so quiet that it sounded almost kind.

"I did not come on board, sir."

"Don't trifle with *me*," returned the captain sternly.

Clare looked straight at him, and said—

"I have done nothing wrong, sir. I know you will help me. I fell asleep last night, as I told you, sir, in the cage of a puma. I knew him, of course! How I came awake on board your ship, I know no more than you do, sir."

The smile of Clare's childhood had scarcely altered, and it now shone full on the captain. He turned away,

and made a tack or two on the quarter-deck. He was a tall, thin man, with a graceful carriage, and a little stoop in the shoulders. He had a handsome, sad face, growing old. His hair was more than half way to gray, and he seemed somewhere about fifty. He had the sternness of a man used to command, but under the sternness Clare saw the sadness.

The attention of the boy was now somewhat divided between the captain and his panther, which seemed possessed with a fierce desire to get at him, though plainly with no inimical intent. The attention of the captain seemed divided between the boy and the panther; his eyes now rested for a moment on the animal, now turned again to the boy. Two officers on the port side of the quarter-deck stole glances at the strange group—the stately, solemn, still man; the ragged creature before him, who looked in his face without fear or anxiety, and with just as little presumption; and the wildly excited panther, whose fierce bounding alternated with cringing abasement of his beautiful person, accompanied by loving sweeps of his most expressive tail.

The captain made a tack or two more on the quarter-deck, then turned sharp on the boy.

"What is your name?" he asked.

"I don't quite know, sir," answered Clare.

"Come with me," said the captain.

To the surprise of the officers, he led the way to his state-room, and the boy followed. The panther gave a howl as Clare disappeared. The officers remarked that the captain looked strange. His lips were compressed as if with vengeance, but the muscles of his face were twitching.

CHAPTER LXV.

AT HOME.

CLARE followed, wondering, but nowise anxious. He saw nothing to make him anxious. The captain looked a good man, and a good man was a friend to Clare! But when he entered the state-room, and saw himself from head to foot in a mirror let into a bulkhead, he was both startled and ashamed: how could the captain take such a scarecrow into his room! he thought. He did not reflect that it was just the sort of thing he did himself. He had indeed felt dirty and disreputable, and been aware of the dry, rasping tongue of the panther on many patches of bare skin, but he had had no idea what a wretched creature he looked. Not one of the garments he saw in the mirror was his own, and they were disgracefully torn. His hair was sticking out every way, and his face smeared with blood. His feet were bare, and one trouser-leg rent to the knee. His enemies had done their best to ensure prejudice, and frustrate belief. They did not see in his look what no honest man could misread. Innocent as he knew himself, he could not help feeling for a moment disconcerted. But his faithfulness threw him on the mercy of the man before him.

The captain turned and sat down. The boy stood in the doorway, staring at his reflex self in the mirror. The captain understood his consternation.

"Come along, my poor boy," he said. "How did you get into this mess?"

"I think I know," answered Clare, "but I'm not sure."

"You must have been drunk," sighed the captain.

"Oh, no, sir!" returned Clare, with one of his radiant

smiles. "I've had but one glass of beer in my life, and I didn't like it."

The captain smiled too, and gazed at him for several moments without speaking.

"It seems to me," he said at last, but as if he were thinking of something quite different, "you must be in want of food."

"Oh, no, sir!" answered Clare again, "I'm used to going without."

Like a child the sport of an evil fairy, he was again the boy of the old wanderings, in the old, hungry times. But did he ever look so lost as in the mirror before him? he wondered.

"You haven't told me——" said the captain, and stopped short, as if he dreaded going further.

"I will tell you anything you want to know, sir. Please ask me."

"You say you did not come on board the frigate: what am I to understand by that?"

"That I was brought, sir, in my sleep. It wouldn't be fair, would it, sir, to mention names, when I don't know for certain who they were that brought me? I never knew anything till I opened my eyes, and thought I was in——"

He paused.

"*Where* did you think you were?" asked the captain eagerly.

"In the dome of the angels, sir," answered Clare.

The captain's face fell. He thought him an innocent, on whom rascals had been playing a practical joke. But that made no difference! If he were a simpleton, he might none the less be——! Was *her* boy left to——?"

He shuddered visibly, and again was silent.

"Tell me," he said at length, "what you remember."

He meant—of the circumstances that immediately preceded his coming to himself on board the Panther; but Clare began with the first thing his memory presented him with. Perhaps he was yet a little dazed. He had not got through a single sentence, when he saw that something earlier wanted telling first; and the same thing happening again and again within the first five minutes of his narration, sir Harry saw he had before him a boy either of fertile imagination, or of "strange, eventful history." But either supposition had its difficulty. If, on the one hand, he had had the tenth part of the experiences hinted at; if, for one thing, he had been but a single month on the tramp, how had he kept such an innocent face, such an angelic smile? If, on the other hand, he was making up these tales, why did he not look sharper? and whence the angelic smile? Did the seeming innocence indicate only such a lack of intellect as occasionally accompanies a remarkable individual gift? He must make him begin at the beginning, and tell everything he knew, or might pretend to know about himself!

"Stop," he said. "You told me you did not quite know your name: what did they call you as far back as you can remember?"

"Clare Porson," answered the boy.

At the first word the captain gave a little cry, but repressed his emotion, and went on. His face was very white, and his breath came and went quickly.

"Why did you say you did not *quite* know your name?"

"My father and mother called me by their name because there was nobody to tell them what my real name was."

"Then they weren't your own father and mother that gave you the name?"

"No, sir. I'm but using theirs till I get my own. I shall one day."

"Why do you think so?"

"Don't *you* think, sir, that everything will come right one day?"

"God grant it!" responded the captain with a groan, self-reproached for the little faith beside the strong desire.

"Do you think it wrong, sir, to use a name that is not quite my own?" said Clare. "People sometimes seem to think so."

"Not at all, my boy! You must have a name. You did not steal it. They gave it you."

The look of the boy when he thus answered him, completely restored sir Harry's confidence in his mental soundness, while both the mode and the nature of his answer to every question he put to him, bore the strongest impress of truth.

"If the boy be a liar," he said to himself, "I will never more trust my kind. I will turn to the wild-beasts, and believe in panthers and hyenas!"

"They did, sir," answered Clare. "Mr. Porson gave me his own name, and he was a clergyman. So I thought afterwards, when I had to think about it, that it couldn't be wrong to use it."

But how could sir Harry palter so with himself? He might have got at the necessary facts so much quicker!

Sir Harry shrank from seeing his suddenly wakened hope, dead for many a year, crumble before his eyes. He dared not yet drive question close.

"Did Mr. Porson give you both your names?" he asked

"No, sir. My mother said I brought the first with me. She said I told them—I don't remember myself—that my name was Clare."

The captain drove back the words that threatened to break from his lips in spite of him. His boy's name was Clarence, but his mother, whose dearest friend was a *Clara*, called her child always *Clare!*

"I mean my second mother, sir," explained Clare; "my own mother is in the dome of the angels."

A flash lightened from the captain's eyes, but he seemed to himself to have gone blind. Clare saw the flash, and wondered.

Again *the dome of the angels!* The words burst into meaning. Out of the depths of the world of life rose to his mind's eye the terrible thing that had made him a lonely man. Again he stood with his head thrown back, looking up at the Assumption of the Virgin painted in that awful dome; again the earthquake seized the church, and shook the painted heaven down upon them. He knew no more. His little boy had been standing near him, holding his mother's hand, but staring up like his father!

He had to force the next words from his throat.

"Where did the good people who gave you their name find you?"

"Sitting on my mother—my own mother. The angels fell down on her, and when they went up again, she had got mixed with them, and went up too."

Some people thought my friend Skymer "a little queer, you know!" I leave my reader to his own thought: he will judge after his kind. Clare's father no longer doubted his perfect faculty.

All through Clare's life, as often as the old, vague, but ever ready vision brought back its old feelings, with them came the old thoughts, the old forms of them, and the old words their attendant shadows; and then Clare talked like a child.

The stern, sorrowful man hid his face in his hands.

"Grace," he murmured—and Clare knew somehow that he spoke to his wife, "we have him again! We will never distrust him more!"

His frame heaved with the choking of his sobs.

Then Clare understood that the grand man was his father. The awe of a perfect gladness fell upon him. He knelt before him, and laid his hands together as in prayer.

"Why did you distrust me, father?" said the half-naked outcast.

"It was not my child, it was my father I distrusted. I am ashamed," said sir Harry, and clasped him in his arms.

The boy laid his blood-stained face against his father's bosom, and his soul was in a better home than a sky full of angels, a home better than the dome itself of all the angels, for his home was his father's heart.

How long they remained thus I cannot tell. It seemed to both as if so it had been from eternity, and so to eternity it would be. When a thing is as it should be, then we know it is from eternity to eternity. The true is.

The father relaxed at length the arms that strained his child to his heart. Clare looked up with white, luminous face. He gazed at his father, cried like little Ann, "You're come!" and slid to his feet. He clasped and kissed and clung to them—would hardly let them go.

All this time the officers on the quarter-deck were wondering what the captain could have to do with the beggarly stowaway. The panther stood on his feet, anxiously waiting, his ears starting at every sound. He was longing for the boy with whom he had played, panther cub with human infant, in the years long gone by. The sweet airs of his childhood were to the panther plainly recognizable through all the accretions that disfigured but could not defile him. The two were the same

age. They had rolled on floor and deck together when neither could hurt—and now neither would. For the animal was perfectly harmless, and chained only because apt to be unseasonably frolicsome. When they let him loose, it was a season of high jinks and rare skylarking. Then the men had to look out! He had twice knocked a man overboard, and had once tumbled overboard himself. But he had never killed a creature, was always gentle with children, and might be trusted to look after any infant.

Sir Harry raised his son, kissed him, set him on his own chair, and retired into an inner cabin.

A knock came to the door. Clare said, "Come in." The quartermaster entered. Instead of sir Harry, he saw the miserable stowaway, seated in the captain's own chair. He swore at him, and ordered him out, prepared to give him a kick as he passed.

"Out with you!" he cried. "Go for'ard. Tell the bo's'n to look out a rope's end. I'll be after you."

"The captain told me to sit here," answered Clare, and sat.

The officer looked closer at him, begged his pardon, saluted, and withdrew.

The father heard, and said to himself, "The boy is a gentleman: he knows where to take his orders."

He called him into the inner cabin, and there washed him from head to foot, rejoicing to find under his rags a skin as clean as his own.

"Now what are we to do for clothes, Clare?" said sir Harry.

"Perhaps somebody would lend me some," answered Clare. "Mayn't I be your cabin-boy, father? You will let me be a sailor, won't you, and sail always with you?"

"You shall be a sailor, my boy," answered sir Harry,

"and sail with me as long as God pleases. You know to obey orders!"

"I will obey the cook if you tell me, father."

"You shall obey nobody but myself," returned sir Harry; "—and the lord high admiral," he added, with a glance upward, and a smile like his son's.

For that day Clare kept to the captain's state-room; the next, he went on deck in a midshipman's uniform, which he wore like a gentleman that could obey orders.

CHAPTER LXVI.

THE END OF CLARE SKYMER'S BOYHOOD.

HIS father had a hammock slung for him in the state-room; he could not be parted from him even when they slept.

One night sir Harry, lying awake, heard a movement in the state-room, and got up. It was a still, star-lit night. The frigate was dreaming away northward with all sail set. Through the windows shone the level stars. From a beam above hung a dim lamp. He could see no one. He went to the hammock. There was no boy in it. Then he spied him, kneeling under the stern-windows, with his head down.

"Anything the matter, Clare?" he asked.

"No, father."

"What are you doing?"

"Trying to say *Thank you for my father!*"

"Oh, thank him, thank him, my boy!" returned sir Harry. "Thank him with all your heart. He will give us *her* some day!"

"Yes, father, he will!" responded Clare.

His father knelt beside him, but neither said word that the other heard.

The next night, Clare was on the quarter-deck with his father, and heard him give certain orders to the officers of the watch. He had never heard orders given in such a way: he spoke so quietly, so directly, so simply! The night was gusty and dark, threatening foul weather. The captain measured the quarter-deck as when first Clare saw him, but with a mien how different! He walked as slow and stately as before, but with a look almost of triumph in his eyes, glancing often at the clouds. The thought of having such a father made Clare tremble with delight from head to foot. His father was the power of the sea-planet that bore them! Him the great vessel, and all aboard of her, obeyed! He was the life of her motions, the soul of her! At his pleasure she bowed her obedient head, and swept over the seas! Clare's heart swelled within him.

But this father had, the night before, knelt with him in the presence of one unseen, worshipping and thanking a higher than himself! As the captain of the Panther sailed his frigate through the seas, so the great father, the father of his father, the father of all fathers, to whom the captain kneeled as a little child, sailed through the heaven of heavens the huge ship of the world, guided fleet upon fleet innumerable through trackless space! And over an infinitely grander sea than the measureless ocean of worlds, the Father was carrying navies of human souls, every soul a world whose affairs none but the Father could understand, through many a storm, and waterspout, and battle with the powers of evil, safe to the haven of the children, the Father's house! And Clare began to understand that so it was.

One day his father said to him—

"Clare, whatever you forget, whatever you remember, mind this—that you and I and your mother are the children of one father, and that we have all three to be good children to that father. If we do as he tells us, he will bring us all at length to the same port. Our admiral is Jesus Christ. We take our orders from him. But each has to sail his own ship."

The boatswain shook in his wide shoes, but Clare never showed him the least disfavour. He recognized at once the two officers he had seen at the menagerie, but beyond giving each a look he could hardly mistake, he showed no sign of having any knowledge of them.

He set himself to be a sailor, and learned fast. I need scarcely say he was as precise in obeying any superior officer as the best sailor on board. In a few weeks he felt and looked to the manner born—as indeed he was, for not only his father, but his grandfather, and his great-grandfather, and more yet of his ancestors,—how many I do not know, were sailors.

He had had a rough shaking. The earthquake had come and gone, and come again and gone a many times. But the shaking earth was his nurse, and she taught him to dwell in a world that cannot be shaken.

THE END.

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